

BBC

Collector's Edition

PEARL HARBOR

THE FULL STORY OF THE SHOCK WORLD WAR TWO RAID

JAPAN'S HIGH-RISK GAMBLE

WHY AMERICA WAS CAUGHT OUT

THE ATTACK: HOUR BY HOUR

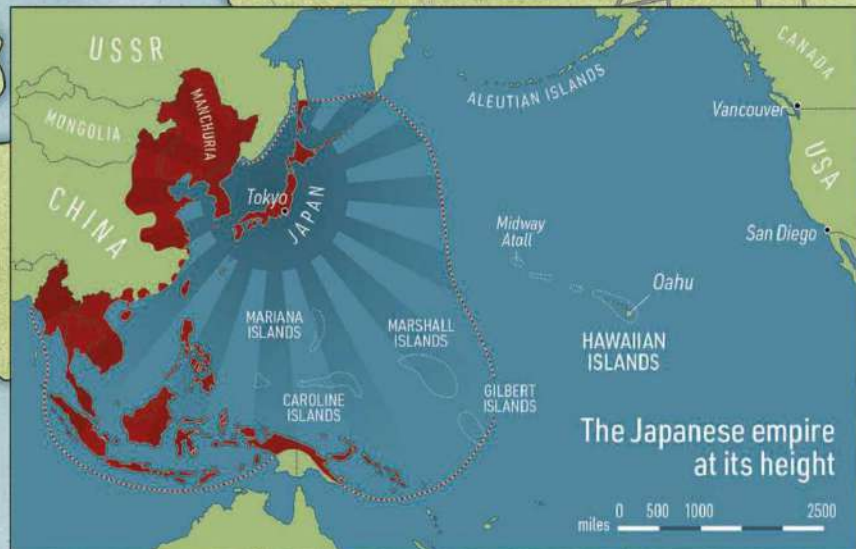
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FROM THE MAKERS OF **BBC** **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE

Pearl Harbor

7 December 1941



Collector's Edition

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THE FULL STORY OF THE SHOCK WORLD WAR TWO RAID

Welcome



Addressing his dumbstruck nation just a day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Franklin D Roosevelt branded 7 December 1941 “a date which will live in infamy”. The American president was speaking with remarkable foresight – more than seven decades on, it’s a story that continues to evoke strong reactions.

What happened that day on a small Hawaiian island in the middle of the Pacific had wide-reaching ramifications. As Japanese bombers screamed through the skies over Pearl Harbor, they plotted a course that would alter not only the lives of the people stationed at the naval base below them, but those of millions across the world.

By rousing the sleeping giant of the US, the strike tipped the balance of power in the Second World War. But its impact continued to register long after the mammoth American war machine had helped the Allies secure victory in 1945. As a consequence of Pearl Harbor, US isolationism was silenced and the nation grew to become the ‘world policeman’.

Composed entirely of brand new content, this special edition brings together personal stories with analysis from expert historians, to recount how the raid unfolded, step by step. It asks why Japan decided to take such a high-risk gamble, and reveals how the aftershocks of the surprise attack were – and continue to be – felt across the globe.

Ellie Cawthorne, Editor

FROM THE MAKERS OF **BBC** **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE

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*It was like being **engulfed** in a tornado*

When a fleet of Japanese aircraft swooped out of the skies above Pearl Harbor in December 1941, they unleashed a firestorm. This is the story of a strike that changed the world

BY JAMES HOLLAND

Early in the morning of Sunday 7 December 1941, the inhabitants of the Hawaiian island of Oahu were woken by the drone of aircraft engines, the rattle of guns and the sound of bombs exploding.

At 7.48am, 183 aircraft swooped in low over the sea. Torpedo bombers had surprised the United States Pacific Fleet at harbour, and within minutes all eight battleships moored there had been hit. Meanwhile, dive bombers screamed down over the island's airbases. A further 170 aircraft roared in to attack a short while later in a second wave, so that by the time the radio announcer told Hawaiians what was happening, the cream of the Pacific Fleet lay sunk or crippled, while on the airfields, 188 aircraft were destroyed and a further 159 damaged.

Witnesses were astounded by how low the Japanese pilots flew. "Hell, I could even see the gold in their teeth," observed one army officer. "It was like being engulfed in a great flood, a tornado or earthquake," said another. "The thing hit so quickly and so powerfully it left you stunned and amazed."

The prospect of war between Japan and the United States had been brewing for some time. Since the end of the 19th century, Japan had been growing rapidly in both population and economic terms, but its small islands lacked the resources required to support this growth. Eager to expand, the Japanese had turned first to China. However, conquest there, launched in 1937, had become bogged down and was costing them much more than they were gaining. Plentiful resources lay in the Pacific area, but were locked in the hands of the western powers of the US, Britain and the Netherlands. With the United States imposing increasingly strict embargoes on oil, steel and other vital supplies, Japan began to feel cornered.

The only conceivable solution, it seemed, was to knock the US fleet out of action, allowing Tokyo the freedom to strike at the west's resource-rich territories in the Pacific. The theory was that the British had their hands full fighting Nazi Germany, the Dutch were out of the war already, and in the time it took the US to recover from the loss of its fleet, Japan would have created a position from which Washington would be forced to sue for peace. It was always going to be a long shot,

but Japan's ultra-nationalistic leaders felt they had no choice but to try.

Pearl Harbor shocked America, and particularly its leaders, who had believed that Japan wouldn't dare take such a bold gamble. When Henry Stimson, US secretary for war, heard the news from Roosevelt, his reaction was one of relief that the long period of indecision was over, and that a crisis had come that would at last bring the nation together. "I feel that this country united," he wrote in his diary, "has practically nothing to fear." The arguments that had raged over isolationism versus war were a thing of the past; no longer would the administration have to produce arms on a wartime scale with a peacetime attitude; the labour strikes that had so blighted the US in 1941 would surely be behind them too. In the outrage





FALL FROM GRACE

The USS *Arizona*, pride of the Pacific Fleet, burns in Pearl Harbor after the Japanese attack. It sank with the loss of 1,177 crew members

that followed the Japanese attack, the great American public were now, at long last, fully behind US entry into the war.

WORLD ON FIRE

In Britain, Churchill was overjoyed at the news of Pearl Harbor. While he had remained steadfast in his belief that Britain would be ultimately victorious, the route now seemed more clear. "United, we could subdue everybody else in the world," he noted grandly. "Many disasters, immeasurable cost and tribulation lay ahead, but there was no more doubt about the end."

Perhaps curiously, Hitler's reaction regarding the prospects for Nazi Germany was much the same. He wrongly believed that Japan's entry into the war meant the US would keep out of Europe and focus on the far east instead. With a woeful lack

of geopolitical understanding, he declared war on America on 11 December. It did, in fact, make little difference.

As it was, the US Atlantic Fleet had been actively taking part in the battle of the Atlantic against Nazi U-boats since September 1941, while Britain and the US had already agreed a Germany-first strategy should it come to all-out war. This was reaffirmed at the Arcadia Conference in Washington a couple of weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack. Such was Britain and the US's growing strength, however, that a Europe-first strategy did not mean they would sit back in the far east and Pacific. Far from it. Admiral Ernest King, the new commander-in-chief of the US fleet, intended to strike back hard – and soon.

He was helped by the fact that, over the previous 18 months, US factories had

already begun the transition to all-out war production; the fruits of that change were starting to be felt by the end of 1941, coincidentally – and fortuitously – at the very moment that the US formally entered the war.

What's more, despite the carnage at Pearl Harbor, the three US aircraft carriers – the most important Japanese targets – had not been at port and so had survived. Further stunning strikes on British, Dutch and US possessions in the far east did not buy the Japanese the time they had hoped to gain from Pearl Harbor. Within six months, the US navy would hit back at Midway, where its carriers played a decisive role. Rather than supercharging Japan's imperial ambitions, then, the great gamble of Pearl Harbor had dragged a fearsome enemy into the fray. ●

AGE OF EMPIRE

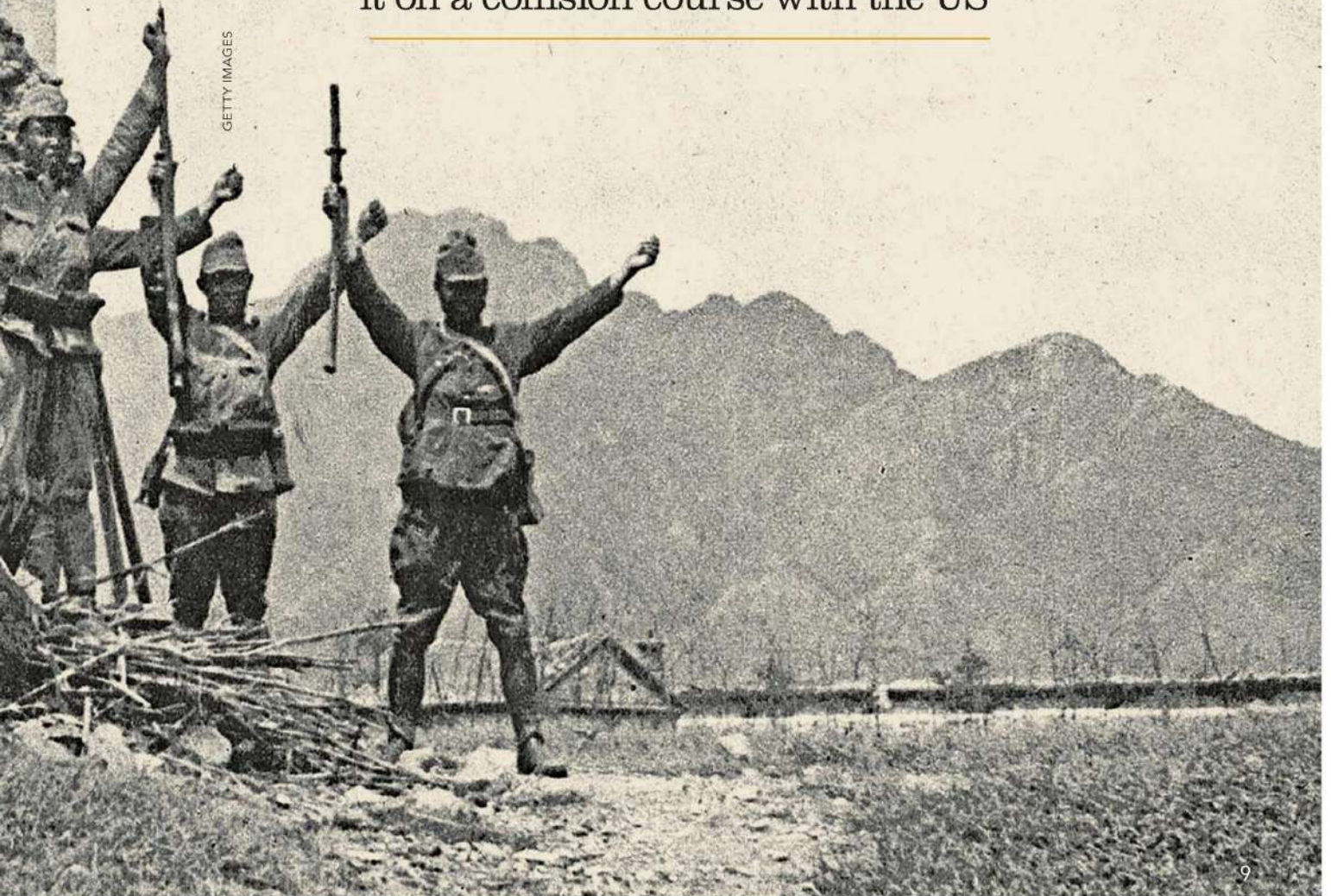
Japanese soldiers cheering at Nankou, Beijing, during the 1937 invasion of China. As the 1930s progressed, Japan's expansionist aims led to tension and conflict in Asia



THE BUILD-UP

The key incidents as Japan's dark alliances and imperial ambitions put it on a collision course with the US

GETTY IMAGES



The GATHERING STORM

Japan's relentless empire-building in the 1930s put the US on red alert – but could Roosevelt convince a reluctant public to stand against the Rising Sun?

BY FRANCIS PIKE



GETTY IMAGES-THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

GROWING PAINS

Japanese soldiers man positions during the battles of Khalkhin Gol, an undeclared 1939 border war with the Soviet Union. In the 1930s, Tokyo was firmly set on expansion



In mid-September 1931, Japanese army officers involved in a plot to annex Manchuria – a northern Chinese region long coveted by Japan – received a warning telegram from Tokyo: “PLOT EXPOSED. ACT BEFORE TATEKAWA’S ARRIVAL.” Japan’s civil government had not authorised the plot, and had sent Major General Yoshitsugu Tatekawa to prevent it. Forewarned, on the evening of 18 September, when Tatekawa’s train arrived in the city of Mukden, the army officers whisked him off to the best teahouse in town, the Literary Chrysanthemum, where Tatekawa was happily plied with tea, sake, a bed and a geisha.

At 10.20pm, with the government’s envoy otherwise engaged, the plotters exploded a small bomb next to the Japanese-controlled railway tracks near Mukden. Although it did little damage, the Japanese army swiftly accused Chinese troops of the crime and sprang into action. By noon the following day most of the junction towns on the South Manchuria Railway had been seized; the rest of the province soon followed. So began what in Japan has become known as the Fifteen-Year War, which ended only with Emperor Hirohito’s surrender, shortly after the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The Japanese army’s Manchurian ruse fooled nobody. On 22 September 1931, the US secretary of state, Henry Stimson, cabled the League of Nations: “It is apparent that the Japanese military have initiated a widely extended movement of aggression only after careful preparation...” Unbeknown to the world, what would come to be called the ‘Mukden Incident’ would lead inexorably towards Pearl Harbor. The Stimson Doctrine that followed – the US government’s policy of refusing to recognise states created by force – was essentially a letter to the Japanese government telling it to keep its hands



Chinese prisoners are held captive by Japanese soldiers during the war over Manchuria in 1931



The New York Times reports on the Washington Naval Conference in 1921. Japan bitterly resented the resulting treaty



off China – a country that had, until the 1820s, been Asia’s greatest power, but was now riven by civil war and threatened by Japanese and Soviet plans to dismember it.

JAPAN’S GRIEVANCES

In January 1919, when the great powers met for the Paris Peace Conference that marked the settlement of the First World War, Japan joined the top table alongside the United States, Britain, France and Italy. Nevertheless, the Asian country still felt like an outsider.

Japan entered the negotiations with two principle aims. Firstly, it wanted a clause on racial equality inserted into

the Treaty of Versailles. This demand stemmed from the passage of a series of anti-Japanese race laws in the US, culminating in the California Alien Land Law of 1913, which banned immigrant farmers from owning land. Racist treatment of Japanese businessmen was also seen as endemic in Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai and other western imperial outposts. So strong was the feeling of racial conspiracy that Duke Aritomo Yamagata, the statesman who had modernised the Japanese army after the overthrow of the shogunate in 1868, warned that it was “extremely important... to take steps to prevent the establishment of a white alliance against the yellow people”. However, the western powers quashed the demand for a racial clause in the Versailles treaty – a decision that would feed into Japan’s ultra-nationalist narrative in years to come.

Japan’s second demand – for the permanent transfer of Germany’s imperial assets in Asia – was only slightly more successful. Having seized Germany’s Kiautschou Bay concession, a valuable 213-square-mile territory on China’s eastern seaboard, Japan was forced to

At the Paris Peace Conference, Japan joined the top table. But the country still felt like an outsider

CROSSING THE LINE

Japanese soldiers seize a railway during the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 – prompted by a staged bombing near the city of Mukden



hand it back to China. As for Germany's southern Pacific empire, Japan was strongarmed into sharing the spoils with Britain and Australia.

Greater insults to Japan's national dignity soon followed at the Washington Naval Conference, which began in November 1921. The aim was to create a multilateral arms limitation treaty by restricting the building of battleships – the weapons of mass destruction of their day. The outcome, which limited the US and Britain to 525,000 tons each while Japan was restricted to 315,000 tons (a ratio of 5:5:3), did little to convince Japanese ultranationalists that the Anglo-Saxon countries were playing fair. In response to the Washington Naval Treaty, Kametaro Mitsukawa, an influential nationalist intellectual, claimed the western powers were “plotting to subjugate Asia completely by the end of the 20th century”.

A DEMOCRACY IN RETREAT

GETTY IMAGES In spite of these setbacks, Japanese mainstream politicians continued to support the global postwar settlement, whose twin pillars were the League of



Japanese troops enter Manchuria on horseback during their 1931 offensive

Nations and the Washington Naval Treaty. However, Japan's democratic institutions, which had worked well since the overthrow of the Tokugawa feudal dictatorship in 1868, and its later replacement by the Meiji Constitution – an ill-defined mix of constitutional and absolute monarchy – were ultimately undone in the early 1930s. The Great Depression undermined Japan's

democratic constitution. Factions in the armed forces and the press took advantage of popular discontent to push their nationalist and anti-capitalist agendas. Moreover, the young Emperor Hirohito refrained from using the supreme powers given to him by the Meiji Constitution to push back against the military.

On 14 November 1930, Prime Minister Osachi Hamaguchi was shot



In 1932, a hit squad killed Prime Minister Inukai and targeted his house guest, Charlie Chaplin

and seriously wounded as he entered Tokyo's main railway station. His health would never recover, and he died eight months later. His attacker was a member of the ultranationalist Aikokusha ('Society of Patriots') party, one of a rash of such groups that sprung up in 1920s Japan. The prospect of an economy sliding into depression, combined with widespread hostility to the London Naval Treaty of 1930 – which renewed Japan's disparity with the west – meant that the attack elicited little public opprobrium.

Eighteen months later, on 9 February 1932, a former finance minister was gunned down by a student member of the ultranationalist Ketsumeidan ('League of Blood'). Next Baron Takuma Dan, a western-sympathising graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was murdered outside the offices of Mitsui Bank, where he was an executive. It was no coincidence that Baron Dan had just hosted the visit of the Earl of Lytton, chairman of a League of Nations committee investigating the Mukden Incident. Worse was to follow. On 15 May 1932 another anti-capitalist group, this time made up of junior naval officers, organised hit squads on eminent liberal figures. Prime Minister Inukai was

murdered at home; his house guest, Charlie Chaplin, the legendary Hollywood comic star, was also targeted, as a famous westerner. Chaplin was lucky to be out watching Sumo wrestling with Inukai's son. In a sign of Japan's increasingly nationalist mood, instead of being condemned, the assassins were popularly celebrated and given short prison sentences.

The political consequences of the assassination were far-reaching. Rather than choosing Inukai's successor from the majority Seiyūkai party, the emperor appointed a navy stalwart, Admiral Viscount Saitō Makoto, as head of a unity government. From this point on, the political parties withered into insignificance, before they were abolished in 1940 when Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe accepted their 'voluntary' liquidation and absorption into his Imperial Rule Assistance Association – an attempt to create a one-party state on the model of Germany's Nazi party.

TIPPING POINT

Increasing opposition to liberals, capitalists and internationalists reached its apogee on 26 February 1936, when 19 young army officers launched a coup



A 1940 propaganda poster from the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, reading: 'Rise, all Japanese citizens'

d'état aimed at protecting the emperor and preserving Japan's *kokutai* ('national essence'). Their views reflected a military education based on the *Imperial Rescript for Seamen and Soldiers*, an 1882 code of ethics that all personnel were required to memorise, which promoted their mission as guardians of a 'sacred nation' and their absolute personal loyalty to the emperor. This 2,700-kanji [character] document was a potent example of brainwashing, marrying bastardised samurai values based on *bushido* ('the way of the warrior') with modern weaponry and training.

Many of the Japanese army's senior generals, also infused with the mythical cult of the god-emperor, gave tacit support to the young officers. The emperor himself, however, was furious. Unlike in 1932, the rebel officers had sought to overthrow the government itself. Hirohito ordered them to be tried, found guilty and executed. So much for the Japanese postwar myth that he was a powerless constitutional monarch.

However, instead of moving to contain the power of the army after the coup attempt, Hirohito allowed it to entrench its political position. In May 1936, the law was changed to allow only active generals and admirals to fill the post of minister of war. This seemingly minor constitutional tweak in effect gave the army and navy a veto over the formation of any Japanese government. It was a tipping point that led Japan inexorably towards a military dictatorship.

Barely a year later, Japan was at war again with China – this time for control of the whole country. The Mukden Incident, through which Japan had



Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe poses with Hitler Youth members in Karuizawa, Japan, 1938

DIVIDE AND RULE

A soldier stands guard beside a Japanese flag at the Great Wall of China in 1937. Japan was given control of the wall in the Tanggu Truce of 1933



conquered Manchuria, had ended with the Tanggu Truce of 1933. The humiliating terms for China ceded not only Manchuria to Japan, but also control of the Great Wall and a 100-mile exclusion zone to its south. By 1937, gradual encroachments by Japan's Kwantung (Manchurian) army had left Beijing all but surrounded.

On the 7 July 1937, an unplanned skirmish at the Marco Polo Bridge to the south of Beijing initiated all-out war between Japan and China. Major battles at Taiyuan and Shanghai were followed by the infamous Nanjing massacre, when as many as 300,000 men, women and children were murdered – a prelude to a decade of war and occupation that would cost more than 20 million Chinese lives. Aggressive international alliances were being forged. In November 1936, Japan had signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany as the pair sought to contain Stalin's burgeoning Soviet Union. The other eventual Axis power, Italy, would join a year later.

After 1936, the command economic model developed by the Kwantung army

in Manchuria was increasingly deployed in Japan. Through the Industrial Bank of Japan, the government directed loans to the producers of war material. Further command-economy steps were taken via the National Mobilization Law of 1938, which downgraded domestic consumption: the focus was on guns not butter. It was an economic model that followed in lockstep with the policies of National Socialism in Germany. Japan's ultranationalists, who dominated the army and navy, were now ready to embark on the creation of an economically self-sufficient 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', aimed at curtailing western influence in the area. For Japan's leaders, its imperial project was existential, driven by a Darwinian faith in the survival of the fittest. "It is clear as day," the philosopher Kazunobu Kanokogi observed, "that if Japan fails to build an empire on the Asian continent, [as a nation] we are all doomed to destruction."

A move to a total war footing was the natural next step. In addition to war with China, Japan's fear of the Soviet Union led to the eruption of a full-scale border

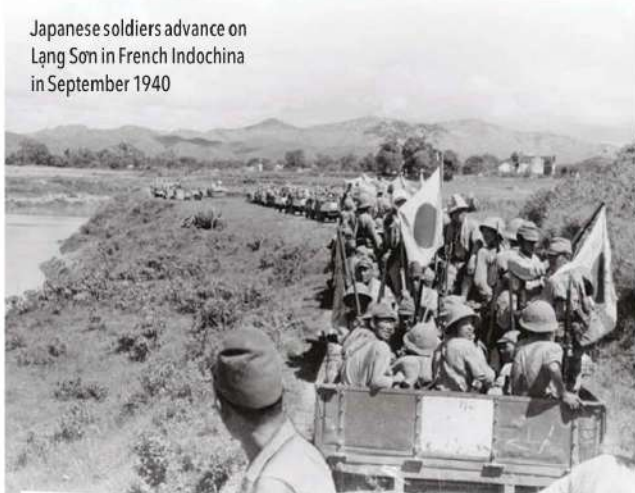


A skirmish at the Marco Polo Bridge (shown here in 1945) tipped China and Japan into total war in 1937



Japanese Kwantung troops in Manchuria. The region was targeted for its natural resources

Japanese soldiers advance on Lạng Sơn in French Indochina in September 1940



Japanese troops prepare to execute a Chinese victim during the 1938 Nanjing massacre



A Japanese machine-gunner lies dead during the 1939 battles of Khalkhin Gol

RED MIST

Soldiers of the Soviet-aligned Mongolian People's Army fight to repel Japan during its border war with the USSR in 1939



GETTY IMAGES-THE ASAHI SHIMBUN/ALAMY/AGF IMAGES

conflict, culminating in a heavy defeat for Japan at the battles of Khalkhin Gol, on the Mongolian-Manchurian border. But with the northern border neutralised by the signing of a pact with the Soviets in April 1941, Japan turned its attention southwards to complete the encirclement of forces loyal to Chiang Kai-shek, nationalist leader of the Republic of China, who were holed up in the remote western city of Chongqing. Looking to cut off Chiang's sources of supply, Japanese troops occupied the north of French Indochina in September 1940.

THE US: FROM ISOLATION TO INTERVENTION

By 1941, in a breathless decade of military conquest, Japan's empire had expanded from an area of 245,000 square miles, including Korea and Taiwan, to 1.6 million square miles, covering Indochina (today's Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and eastern China. The number of people living under Japanese rule had tripled from 100 million to 300 million.

While Japan was tearing up the geopolitical landscape of Asia, where was America? The United States had sent a naval expedition to open up trade with Japan in the 19th century, had fought a pitched battle on Chinese soil to defend its trading rights, had conquered the Hawaiian kingdom and seized the Philippines. But in the 1930s, the world's undisputed economic superpower had gone missing.

After the First World War, the US had turned isolationist. The dominant narrative was that the Great War was a product of Europe's corrupt, undemocratic monarchies. War profiteering was also blamed. *Merchants of Death*, a bestseller in 1934, was one of the many polemic publications that turned the American public towards neutrality in international affairs. The Great Depression following the 1929 Wall Street Crash only heightened the mood of introspection. The protectionist Smoot-Hawley Act (1930), which raised tariffs on over 20,000 imported goods, confirmed the US's isolationist stance. Legendary columnist Walter Lippmann was expressing the majority view when he wrote in 1936: "The policy of the United States is to remain free and untangled." In both 1932 and 1936, President Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR) ran on an isolationist ticket. Indeed Roosevelt, as commander-



Japan's proposed Dai Tōa Kyōeiken, or 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', as illustrated in a 1940 propaganda booklet for children

in-chief, presided over an armed force that was only the 18th largest in the world, with fewer soldiers than Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland.

Yet just a year after his second election victory, Roosevelt signalled a change of course. During a speech in Chicago on 5 October 1937, with Shanghai under siege and the most important US trade concession under threat, he warned: "The peace of the world is today being threatened... We are determined to

in September 1940, that did most to alarm the court of public opinion. The American people, like Roosevelt, began to fear isolation in a totalitarian world. Increasingly, FDR initiated a covert defence of the free world. The Lend-Lease Act of March 1941, though primarily designed to offer military aid to Britain, also started to fund Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Kuomintang army's resistance to Japan.

Most importantly, the hawks in Roosevelt's administration finally managed to overcome his dovish secretary of state, Cordell Hull, who had hitherto resisted the call for meaningful sanctions against Japan. On 25 July 1941, Roosevelt froze all Japanese monetary assets held in the US, which immediately threatened Tokyo's ability to supply its war machine. Japan's cabinet board reported that "the empire will shortly be impoverished and unable to hold its own". It predicted that the stocks of 8 out of 11 vital commodities would be depleted 50 per cent or more by 1942. Most significantly, Japan was unable to buy oil from Standard Oil of California, which had previously supplied some 80 per cent of its requirements.

Walter Lippmann spoke for many in writing: "The policy of the US is to remain free and untangled"

keep out of the war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement."

Where Roosevelt led, popular opinion followed. Every new Japanese action weakened America's isolationist resolve: the 'rape of Nanjing', the invasion of Indochina, the strafing of the USS *Panay* on the Yangtse river. For the US public, however, it was probably the Tripartite Pact, signed by Germany, Japan and Italy

THE DECISION TO ATTACK

With a dwindling supply of petroleum, Japan faced the appalling prospect of having to give up its ambitions for a 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'. In reaction to the US's financial freeze and de facto oil

READY FOR ACTION

The Japanese aircraft carrier *Akagi* in the summer of 1941. Japan's navy was seen as key to eliminating the US threat



embargo, on 3 September 1941, Prime Minister Konoe's cabinet convened to discuss the 'Outline Plan for the Execution of the Empire's National Policy', produced by Imperial General Headquarters, a council of top-ranking army and navy officers. Unless the western powers backed down, the cabinet resolved "... to go to war with the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands if necessary".

The accepted strategy for combating the west was for Japan to move rapidly to secure the oil-rich Dutch East Indies and the Philippines, a US colonial dependency. The supposedly formidable British military and naval garrison at Singapore would be taken, along with commodity-rich Malaya and Burma. Meanwhile, the main body of the Japanese navy would wait for the approach of the US fleet as it sailed to relieve the Philippines – which was indeed the proposal of 'War Plan Orange', as conceived by the joint US Army and Navy Board in the 1920s. Here, at the Marshall Islands, in the western approaches of the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese navy would annihilate the US navy, just as the legendary Admiral Tōgō had decimated the Russian navy at the battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

However, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who as commander-in-chief of its Combined Fleet held the pivotal role in Japan's war strategy against the United States, had other ideas. He turned conventional wisdom on its head by planning a surprise attack on the US's key Pacific naval base, located in Hawaii. By sinking America's Pacific Fleet in a surprise attack – particularly its flotilla of aircraft carriers, which Yamamoto had identified as the key sea weapons of the coming war – he would seek to delay a US naval advance. This would give time for Japan to build up defences in the Pacific islands, and secure its resource supply lines within its newly acquired south-east Asian empire. At best, Yamamoto surmised that, after the destruction of the US navy at Pearl Harbor, Washington might even offer a truce.

It was a risky strategy, opposed in Tokyo because the plan exposed Japan's six main fleet carriers to the possibility of discovery and destruction. Furthermore, the aircraft carrier was a barely tested weapons system, with only Britain's attack on the Italian navy at the battle of Taranto as an example of a carrier engagement. Yet Yamamoto was confident in the capabilities of Japan's world-class torpedo planes, and indeed the torpedoes themselves, which had been

designed in great secrecy in the interwar years to offer unparalleled speed, range and accuracy. Faced with continued opposition from his colleagues in Tokyo, Yamamoto nudged the decision his way by threatening to resign.

FINAL TALKS FALTER

As tensions rose with the US, on 27 November 1940 Japan sent former foreign minister Admiral Kichisaburō Nomura to Washington as ambassador. He was tasked with negotiating a lasting peace.



Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who advocated a surprise attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor

COURTESY OF THE NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND-NH 73059/TOPFOTO



Japanese diplomat Saburō Kurusu (standing) and Adolf Hitler (right) at the signing of the Tripartite Pact in Berlin, 1940



Ultranationalist Hideki Tojo, then war minister, bows to Hirohito at an imperial ceremony in October 1940



When the bellicose Tojo was appointed prime minister in 1941, the prospect of peace receded

FDR knew war was inevitable. From detected troop movements, south-east Asia was the assumed target

In line with the Stimson Doctrine, the US demanded 'open-door' trade, with no regime change in Asia except through peaceful means and no interference in the affairs of other nations. These already tough conditions were stiffened further with American insistence, after the Tripartite Pact, that Japan should break ties with Hitler. The chances of a diplomatic breakthrough became even more remote in July 1941, when Japan signed the 'Protocol Concerning Joint Defence and Joint Military Cooperation' with France's collaborationist Vichy government, which effectively ceded control of French Indochina to Tokyo.

Japan's suspicion was that the US was playing for time while Roosevelt, having loosened Congress's purse strings, set about rebuilding US military capability. And all the while, Japan's stockpiles of raw materials – particularly oil – were running down. With the Japanese cabinet

demanding the US and its western allies back down on its assets freeze, the scope for compromise was limited. When Emperor Hirohito's counsellors advised him to choose the bellicose General Hideki Tojo as prime minister on 17 October 1941, the path to peace became vanishingly narrow. Tojo was an ultranationalist, who had asserted in an essay published in 1934 that Japan must "spread [its own] moral principles to the world, [for] the cultural and ideological warfare of the 'Imperial Way' is about to begin".

At the imperial conference on 5 November, Hirohito approved Yamamoto's plan of attack. The following day, Ambassador Nomura presented Washington with final concessions, known as Proposal A, for a partial withdrawal of Japanese troops from China. The US rejected this offer, having learned from their codebreaking

intercepts that another proposal would follow. On the 20 November, Japan's Proposal B offered withdrawal from southern Indochina if the US would unfreeze Japan's assets and refrain from supplying Chiang Kai-shek's armies in China. Both proposals were declined. Aware from intercepts on 26 November that Japan would launch an attack sometime after 29 November, Roosevelt knew that war was all but inevitable. From detected troop movements, the assumption was that the target would be somewhere in south-east Asia, though there were uncertainties about the whereabouts of Yamamoto's Combined Fleet. In fact, it was hiding under radio silence in the remote Kuril Islands, at the northernmost tip of Japan.

In the meantime, with nothing further to gain from negotiations, Cordell Hull, the US secretary of state, presented Ambassador Nomura with a 10-point ultimatum, including the demand that Japan withdraw from all of China and Indochina. Faced with utter defeat and humiliation if he accepted the American terms, Hirohito, at a conference with General Tojo on 1 December 1941, gave the final sanction for simultaneous attacks on Pearl Harbor, the Philippines and British Malaya. Japan's invasion of China, which had started with the Mukden Incident in 1931, had become the *casus belli* that had launched Japan into war with the world's greatest empire, Britain, and the world's most powerful nation: the United States. ●

THE ROAD TO PEARL HARBOR

The crucial Second World War events in the lead-up to Japan's surprise attack

BY NIGEL JONES



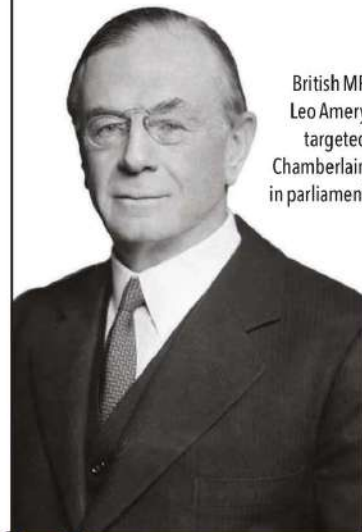
Britain's declaration of war on Germany being read in London

3 September 1939

Britain and France, fulfilling a guarantee to Poland, **declare war on Germany** after the expiry of an ultimatum demanding withdrawal is ignored by Hitler. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain broadcasts the declaration of war on BBC radio. His announcement coincides with the war's first air-raid warning – a false alarm.

7 May 1940

The British parliament debates the Norway fiasco. A series of speeches attacking the government's conduct of the campaign climaxes with Conservative politician Leo Amery's **demand for Chamberlain to "in the name of God - go!"** The government majority is severely reduced by a Tory rebellion.



British MP Leo Amery targeted Chamberlain in parliament

GETTY IMAGES/AGF IMAGES/ALAMY

1 September 1939

Nazi Germany invades Poland. In a lightning six-week "Blitzkrieg" campaign the country is conquered and its capital, Warsaw, is bombed and reduced to rubble. In a prearranged plan, **Stalin's Soviet Union occupies eastern Poland** and the two totalitarian powers divide the country between them.

German troops in dinghies during their Norwegian campaign



9 April 1940

Germany invades Norway and Denmark. Denmark is subdued within hours, but Norway fiercely resists sea and air landings. British and French troops land in Norwegian ports, but withdraw after a badly bungled campaign. The German navy suffers severe losses, which later will hamper its ability to invade Britain.

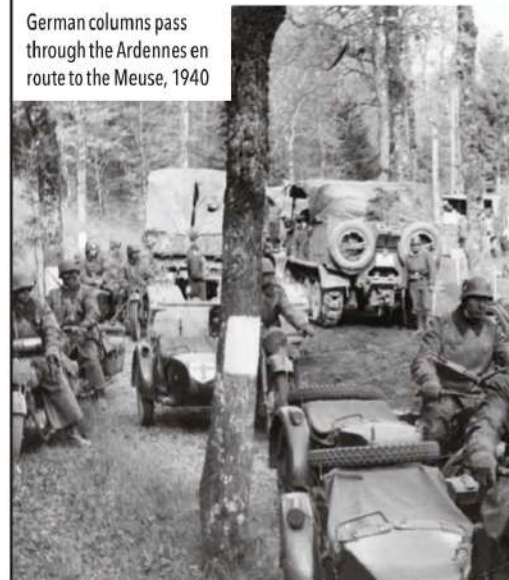


Wehrmacht soldiers cross and occupy the Polish border at Sopot

10 May 1940

Germany attacks France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. In another Blitzkrieg campaign, combined German air and armour assaults rapidly penetrate French defences. German spearheads cross the river Meuse and threaten to divide the British and French armies.

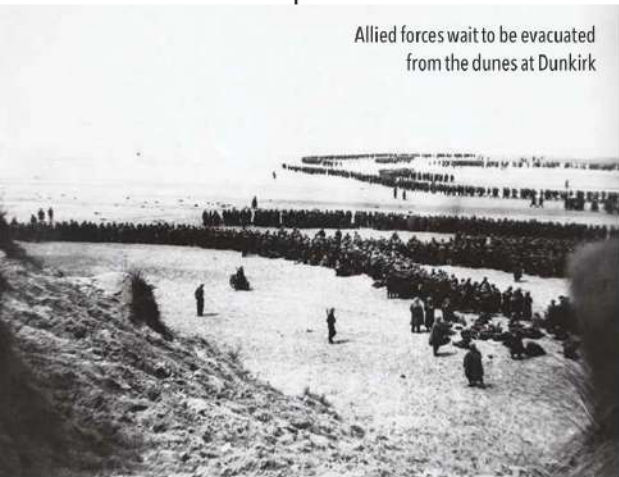
German columns pass through the Ardennes en route to the Meuse, 1940



26 May 1940

After German columns reach the coast of the English Channel, splitting the Allied armies in two, Operation Dynamo starts to **evacuate British, French and Belgian troops from the port of Dunkirk**. Some 340,000 men are rescued by the navy and an armada of small ships, leaving most of the equipment behind.

Allied forces wait to be evacuated from the dunes at Dunkirk



High-ranking Nazis, including Göring, Hess and Hitler, confer at the signing of the French-German armistice

22 June 1940

France signs an armistice with Hitler in a humiliating ceremony in a railway carriage at the site of the 1918 armistice ending the First World War. The country is divided into a German-occupied northern zone, including Paris, and the puppet Vichy state, ruled by Pétain under Nazi control.

10 May 1940

Following Germany's attack on the Low Countries, Chamberlain resigns after the opposition Labour party refuses to serve under him in a new national government. The belligerent veteran statesman **Winston Churchill becomes prime minister**, with a remit to win the war at all costs. He makes flying trips to France in a vain bid to stiffen collapsing French resistance.

GETTY IMAGES

Civilians attempt to flee Paris by rail ahead of the advancing German army



A French sailor drowns at Mers El Kébir in this Nazi occupation poster

3 July 1940

Churchill orders **British warships to attack the French fleet** at Mers El Kébir in Algeria, sinking several vessels to stop them falling into German hands. More than a thousand French sailors die. French ships in other ports are seized. The ruthless action impresses the Americans with British determination to fight on.

14 June 1940

Paris falls to German invaders without resistance as much of the civilian population flees. French premier Paul Reynaud resigns and is succeeded by the aged defeatist Marshal Philippe Pétain, who opens peace negotiations with the Germans. The same week, Italy declares war on Britain and France.



7 September 1940

The Luftwaffe switches the main weight of its air assault to bombing Britain's cities and ports. **The Blitz inflicts huge damage** and kills up to 50,000, but fails to break morale. British stoicism under fire, reported by US journalists, attracts American admiration and sympathy.



Young Londoners peer out from a cycle shop damaged in the Blitz



The flags of the Tripartite Pact nations hang above a park in Tokyo in 1940

27 September 1940

Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and imperial Japan **sign the Tripartite Pact**, committing the three Axis powers to a military alliance. The pact gives Japan's military leadership the green light for its coming attack on the US and the British empire in the far east.

11 March 1941

President **Roosevelt signs the Lend-Lease Act**, which authorises the US to transfer oil, food and weaponry to any country deemed to be defending American interests. It marks a decisive step towards US support for the Allies.

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

10 July 1940

German warplanes attack military airfields in southern England after Churchill rejects Hitler's peace overtures. **The Battle of Britain begins**, in which "the Few" – the young pilots of RAF Fighter Command – defeat the Nazi Luftwaffe's sustained attempt to cripple Britain's air defences ahead of a projected invasion.



5 November 1940

The Democrat **Franklin D Roosevelt (pictured left)** is elected as **US president** for an unprecedented third term in a landslide win over Wendell Willkie. Roosevelt's triumph is a victory over isolationist "America First" factions, and seen as ensuring US backing for the Allied cause.



9 December 1940

After the Italian 10th army invades Egypt, the British mount a counterattack, retaking the port of Sidi Barrani and **capturing 40,000 Italian soldiers** for the loss of under 700 men. As a result, Hitler sends the Afrika Korps under General Erwin Rommel to north Africa to prop up his failing Italian ally.



RAF Fighter Command pilots rest beside their Hurricanes in July 1940

10 May 1941

In London, the chamber of the **House of Commons is destroyed** in the last major German raid of the Blitz. On the same day, Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, is captured after an abortive one-man 'peace flight' to Scotland.



The debris of Hess's Messerschmitt from his lone flight to Scotland

GETTY IMAGES

German troops advance through the Soviet Union during Operation Barbarossa



22 June 1941

Germany and its allies invade the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. The surprise attack destroys much of the Soviet Air Forces and captures hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Churchill immediately offers support to Stalin as three massive Nazi army groups drive deep into the Soviet heartland.

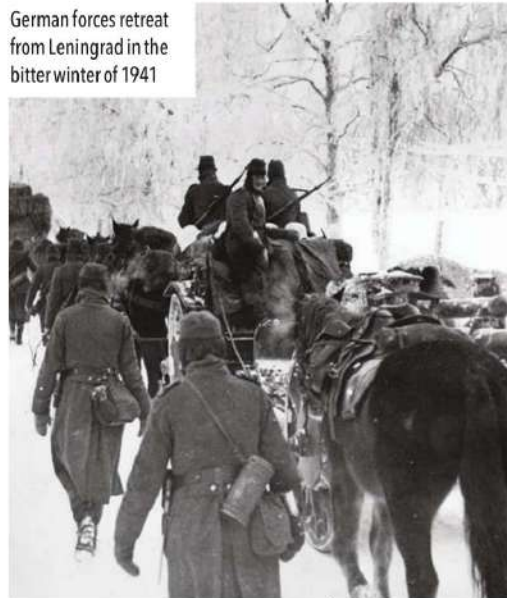
6 April 1941

A pro-British coup in Belgrade incites **Hitler to invade the Balkans.** His troops occupy Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete. Though successful, the operation stretches Nazi resources in battling partisan resistance and delays the invasion of the Soviet Union.



Yugoslavs in Belgrade wait to see King Peter II before he goes into exile following the Nazi invasion

German forces retreat from Leningrad in the bitter winter of 1941



6 December 1941

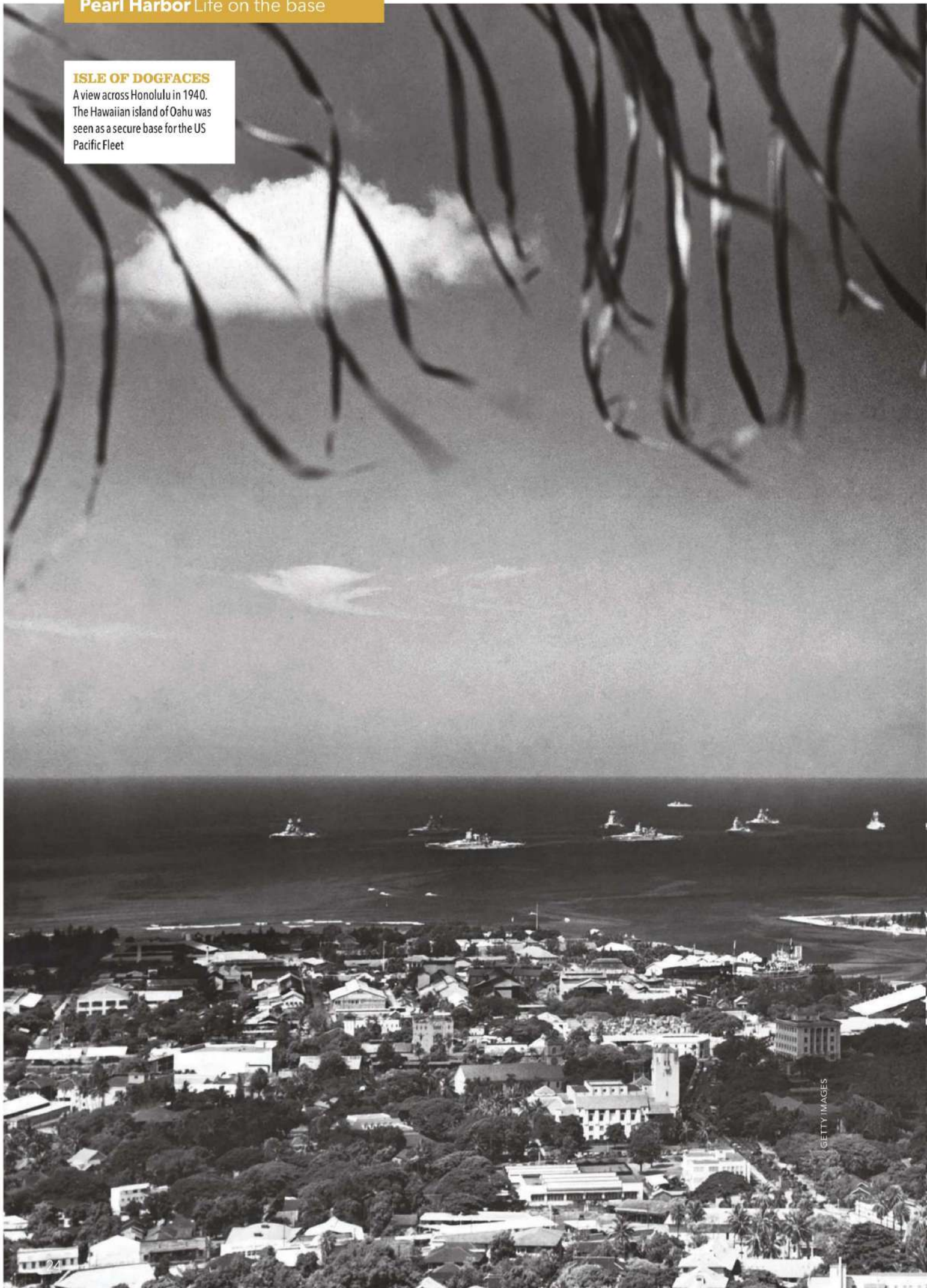
After months of rising tensions between Japan and the US in the Pacific, Japanese pilots make the final preparations for a devastating surprise **attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.** ●

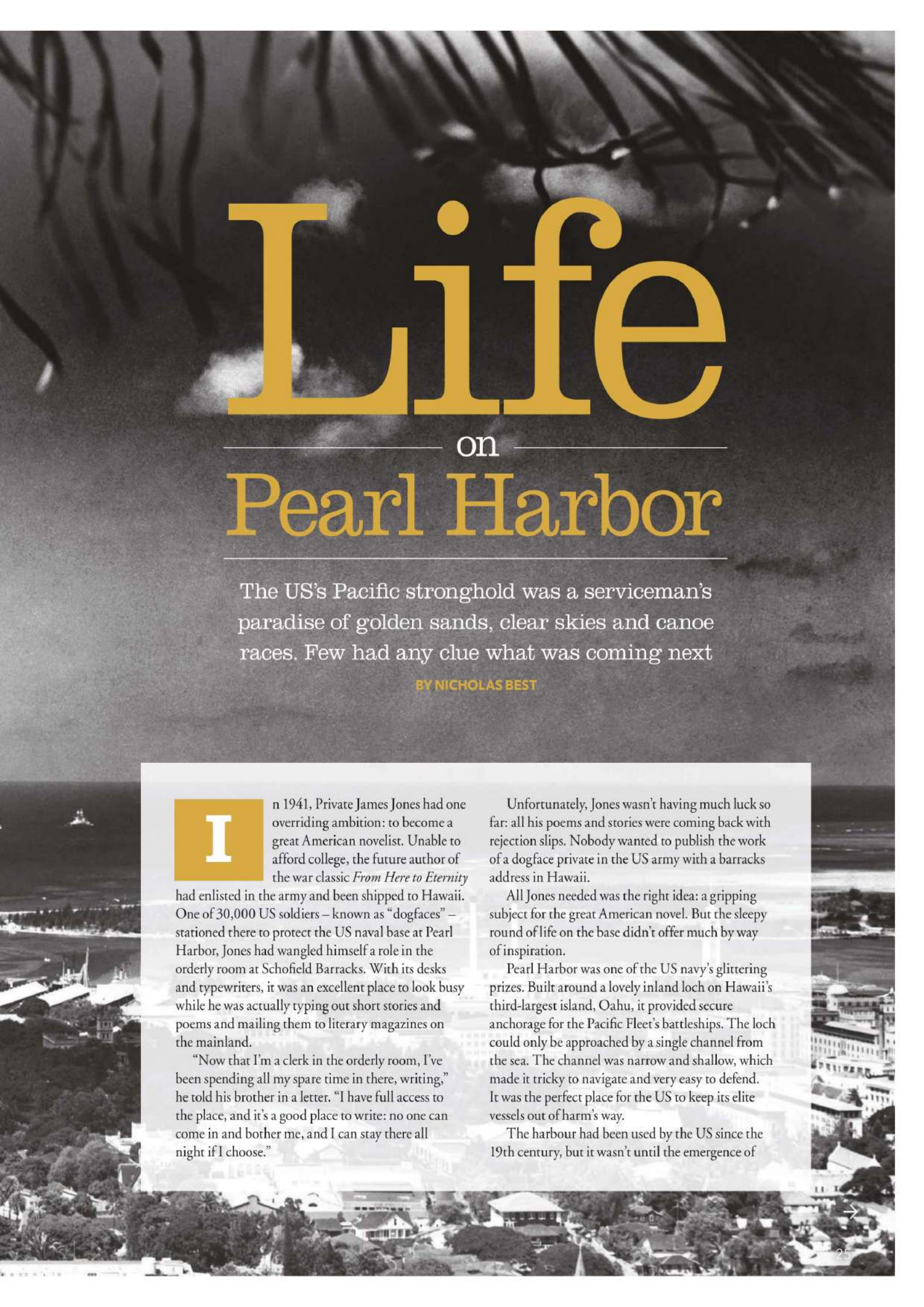
2 December 1941

Having besieged Leningrad, **the invading Germans reach the outer suburbs of Moscow.** But the arrival of the severe Russian winter freezes armour and stops the invasion in its tracks, allowing the Russians to regroup and launch a counter-offensive, driving the Germans back.

ISLE OF DOGFACES

A view across Honolulu in 1940. The Hawaiian island of Oahu was seen as a secure base for the US Pacific Fleet





Life

on

Pearl Harbor

The US's Pacific stronghold was a serviceman's paradise of golden sands, clear skies and canoe races. Few had any clue what was coming next

BY NICHOLAS BEST

In 1941, Private James Jones had one overriding ambition: to become a great American novelist. Unable to afford college, the future author of the war classic *From Here to Eternity* had enlisted in the army and been shipped to Hawaii. One of 30,000 US soldiers – known as “dogfaces” – stationed there to protect the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Jones had wangled himself a role in the orderly room at Schofield Barracks. With its desks and typewriters, it was an excellent place to look busy while he was actually typing out short stories and poems and mailing them to literary magazines on the mainland.

“Now that I’m a clerk in the orderly room, I’ve been spending all my spare time in there, writing,” he told his brother in a letter. “I have full access to the place, and it’s a good place to write: no one can come in and bother me, and I can stay there all night if I choose.”

Unfortunately, Jones wasn’t having much luck so far: all his poems and stories were coming back with rejection slips. Nobody wanted to publish the work of a dogface private in the US army with a barracks address in Hawaii.

All Jones needed was the right idea: a gripping subject for the great American novel. But the sleepy round of life on the base didn’t offer much by way of inspiration.

Pearl Harbor was one of the US navy’s glittering prizes. Built around a lovely inland loch on Hawaii’s third-largest island, Oahu, it provided secure anchorage for the Pacific Fleet’s battleships. The loch could only be approached by a single channel from the sea. The channel was narrow and shallow, which made it tricky to navigate and very easy to defend. It was the perfect place for the US to keep its elite vessels out of harm’s way.

The harbour had been used by the US since the 19th century, but it wasn’t until the emergence of

ON THE TOWN

Sailors on Hotel Street in Honolulu. US chiefs built a recreation centre offering bowling, boxing and beer to relieve pressure on the capital

Japan as a naval power after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 that it acquired strategic significance. If there was a threat to American interests in the Pacific, the US navy needed Pearl Harbor as a forward base to keep its warships in readiness.

The harbour had become even more important after Japan's invasion of China in 1937. Malaya, French Indochina and other Pacific countries were next on the list of targets as Japan sought to guarantee a supply of food, labour and raw materials for its economy. Washington viewed that idea with alarm.

The situation worsened with Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939. Fearing the United States might soon have to defend itself in a world war, the US navy decided to move the bulk of its Battle Fleet forward from San Diego in California to Hawaii. The transfer was completed in the summer of 1940. By the time all the warships had assembled, Pearl Harbor had never seen so much firepower.

The move made perfect sense to the White House, but it was viewed very differently in Tokyo. General Hideki Tojo, the Japanese war minister who was appointed prime minister in 1941, took it as a sign the US intended to attack Japan in the near future. He complained to Emperor Hirohito that the Americans were holding a dagger to Japan's throat. Tojo argued that Japan should strike first,

The authorities were worried that disaffected Japanese living on Oahu might attempt sabotage



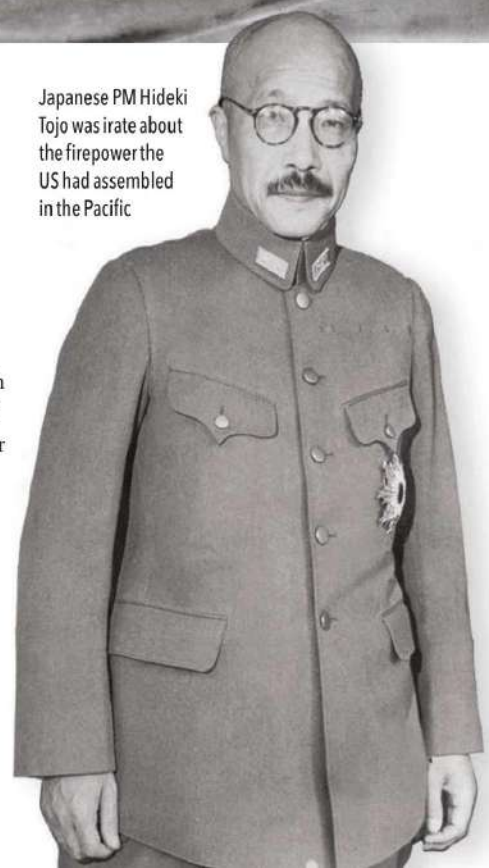
crippling the US fleet before it could do any damage. His generals agreed, but plenty of other people didn't.

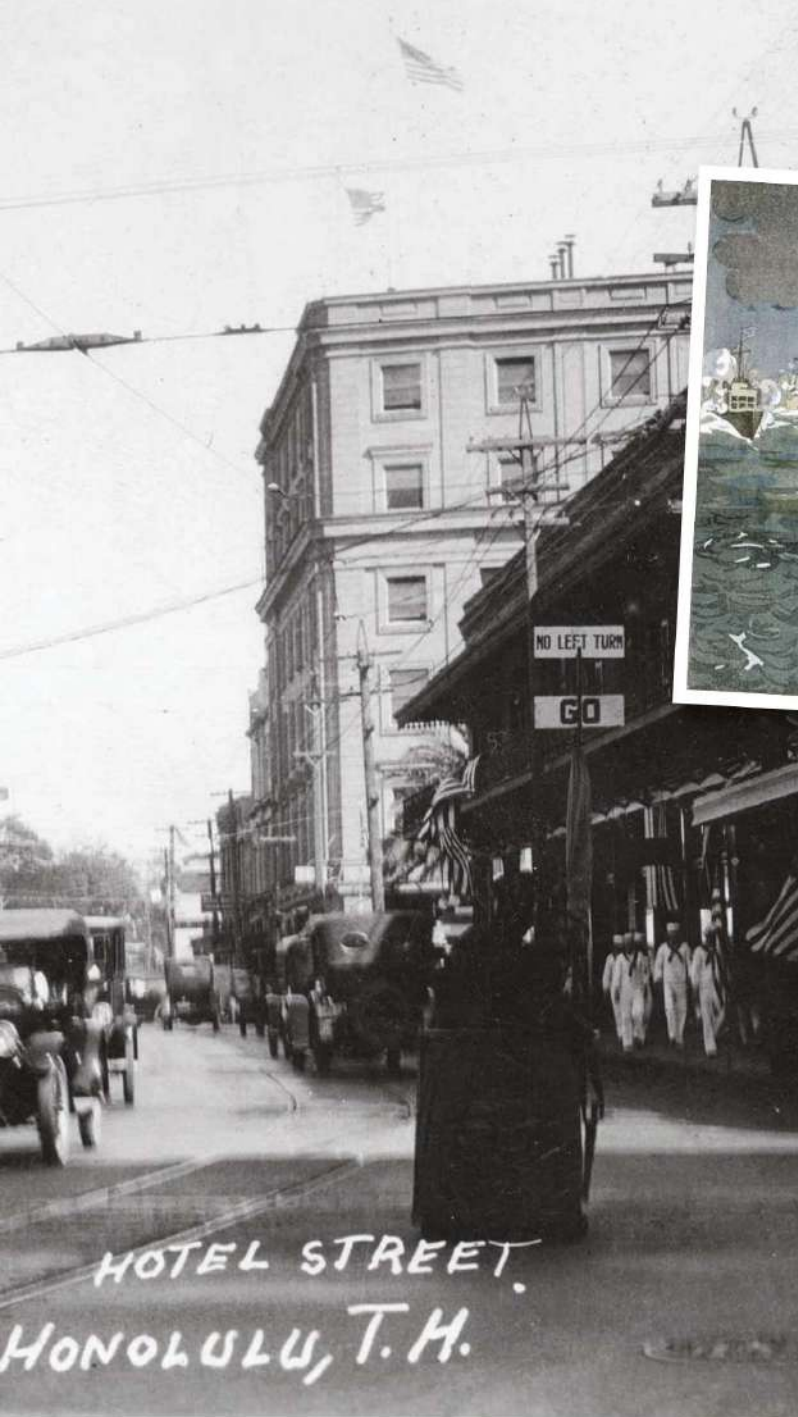
Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the fleet, was concerned that a long war with the United States could prove disastrous, and believed the only chance of success was a swift surprise assault. "To ensure victory," he said, "we would have to march into Washington and dictate the terms of peace in the White House. I wonder if our politicians (who speak so lightly of a Japanese-American war) are confident of the final outcome and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices."

ISLAND FORTRESS

While Yamamoto voiced his misgivings, the Americans were busily transforming the sleepy little island of Oahu into a

Japanese PM Hideki Tojo was irate about the firepower the US had assembled in the Pacific

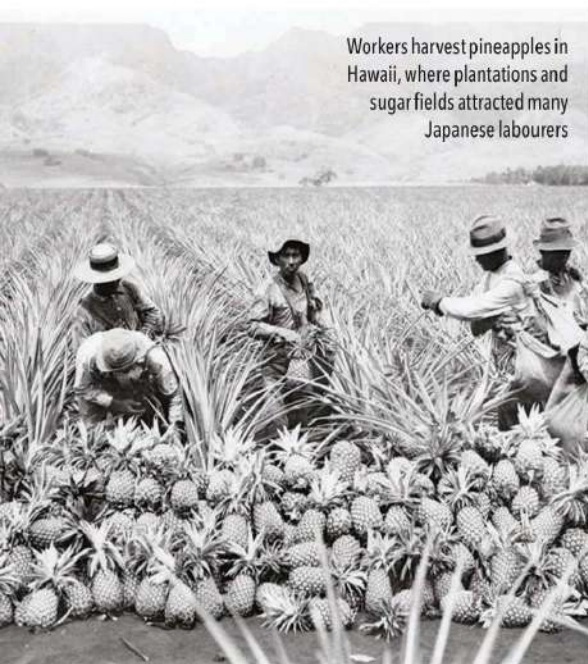




A 1905 print of the Japanese fleet routing the Russians in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war



An aerial view of Pearl Harbor on 30 October 1941, less than six weeks before the attack



Workers harvest pineapples in Hawaii, where plantations and sugar fields attracted many Japanese labourers

military fortress, capable of supporting the Pacific Fleet, several squadrons of aircraft and a substantial number of soldiers for the foreseeable future. That meant providing suitable defences and erecting large quantities of cheap housing to accommodate the massive influx of service personnel and defence contractors from the mainland.

The defences were aimed at the Japanese, but they took a curious form. Oahu island was easy enough to protect from sea attack, but the machine-gun posts in Honolulu, the Hawaiian capital, pointed down the street rather than out to sea. This was because the authorities were far more afraid of an attack from the Japanese already living on the island.

Well over a third of the Hawaiian population were Americans of Japanese descent. Their parents and grandparents

had come from Japan to work in the sugar fields and pineapple plantations that were the mainstay of the economy. The new arrivals had been regarded much the same way as black Americans in the cotton fields. Japanese had been banned from owning land in many US states, as well as from marrying whites and becoming naturalised citizens. "You're stereotyped – you're a Jap," said one Japanese-American. "There is no, 'Oh, you know, he's American. He's born in Hawaii. He's a citizen.'"

Despite this, the younger generation had grown up to become patriotic Americans, as ready as anyone else to fight for their country. That didn't stop the authorities from viewing them with deep suspicion.

Sabotage was the authorities' main fear: the worry that disaffected islanders

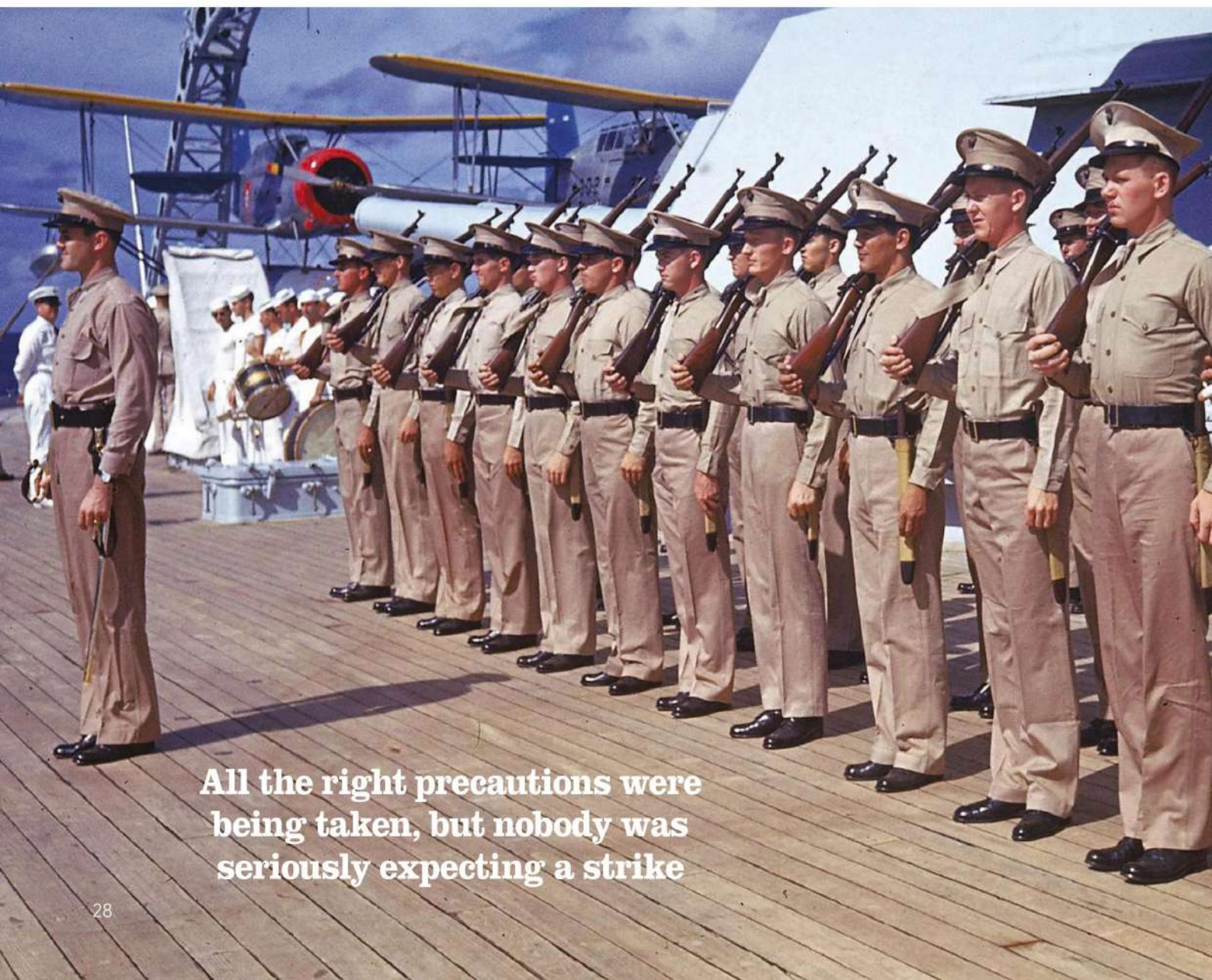


WAR AND PEACE

Bathers on Waikiki beach relax beside barbed wire coils. With its hotels and hula dancing, the beach was like a millionaire's playground



A sailor shares a drink with a woman while on shore leave in Hawaii, October 1940



All the right precautions were being taken, but nobody was seriously expecting a strike

of Japanese descent might destroy US ships and aircraft with bombs or high explosives. They could also blow up ammunition dumps on Oahu, or disrupt fuel supplies, or damage radio communications. With the US fleet safe from naval attack in Pearl Harbor, the only real danger was thought to come from fifth columnists among the local population.

Nobody gave much thought to attack from the air. Pearl Harbor was well equipped with searchlights and anti-aircraft guns. People living nearby were encouraged to dig air-raid shelters in their gardens. All the right precautions were being taken, but nobody was seriously expecting a strike. The Americans on Oahu might have been preparing for war, but they were expecting the fighting to happen somewhere else.

Work on the island continued apace as sandbags were filled and coils of barbed wire were raised along the beaches

GETTY IMAGES-POPPER/GETTY IMAGES



LINE OF DUTY

A US Marine Corps unit stands to attention aboard their battleship during manoeuvres off Hawaii, 1941. The ships took turns going to sea



STARS AND STRIKES

A squadron of Douglas TBD-1 torpedo bombers flies over Hawaii in March 1941. The volcanic cone of Diamond Head is visible in the background

at potential landing spots. In August 1941, the new Bloch Recreation Center was opened to provide entertainment for the men off duty and remove some of the pressure on Honolulu. It offered a cinema, music, billiards, boxing, bowling and beer – everything the city did except brothels and clip joints.

The new centre was highly necessary. Oahu was an attractive posting for service officers and their wives. Off duty, they could enjoy an almost continuous round of golf, bridge and tennis parties, horse riding, beach picnics and dinner dances, if they so wished. But life for the enlisted men was very different.

Reveille on most ships was around 06:00. After breakfast at 08:00, bedding was cleared away and sailors were assigned their tasks for the day – anything from cooking or swabbing the decks to routine maintenance of guns and machinery. Lunch was at noon, after which work continued until 16:30, with dinner an hour later.

The men had time to themselves after that, but they were paid so badly that they couldn't afford the same pursuits as the officers. Barring the occasional trip to Honolulu, they usually remained aboard ship, playing cards or practising baseball until bedtime.

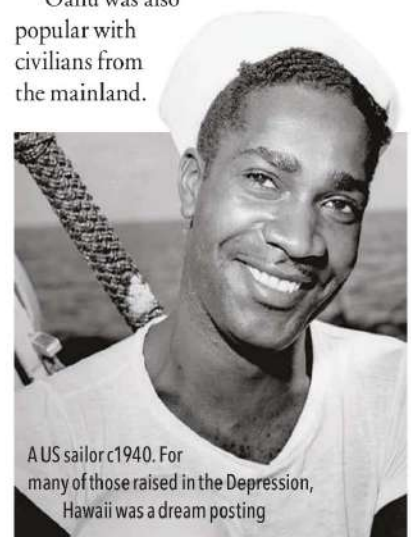
The housing shortage added to the problems. It was exacerbated by the hundreds of service wives who arrived on Oahu independently, renting whatever accommodation they could find at exorbitant rates so as to be close to their husbands. The hillsides echoed to the sound of explosions as rocks were blasted and ground was levelled to make way for more housing. These explosions

proved hard to distinguish from the first Japanese bombs when they fell.

For all its drawbacks, the island was still a wonderful posting for servicemen, particularly those who had grown up poor during the Depression of the 1930s. Waikiki beach, with its surf, golden sands, hula dancing and canoe races, was a millionaire's playground in itself. It was the first place navy nurse Ann Danyo visited after her arrival in October 1941. "The beach was only a city block long, and always crowded because the whole fleet was there," she recalled. "Only half the ships were in port at any one time while the other half was on manoeuvres. They took turns going to sea each week."

Danyo and her fellow nurses had no car, so would go on hikes instead: "We saw so many interesting sights. We saw how the natives lived and how many Orientals lived in among the natives. All were so friendly and waved to us and came out to talk to us."

Oahu was also popular with civilians from the mainland.



A US sailor c1940. For many of those raised in the Depression, Hawaii was a dream posting





ALL HANDS ON DECK

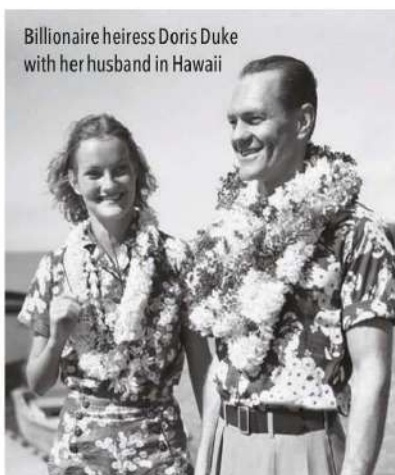
Pilot and crew prepare for takeoff on an aircraft carrier in the waters off Hawaii. At the time of the 1941 attack, the carriers were absent



Lieutenant-General Short, Lord Mountbatten and Admiral Kimmel in Hawaii in 1941

Pearl Harbor. He was appalled at what he found: the place lay wide open to attack for anyone with eyes to see. British warplanes had managed to cripple three Italian battleships at Taranto in 1940 by dropping torpedoes in shallow water, after taking off from an aircraft carrier. The success of that raid, the first of its kind ever attempted, held obvious implications for Pearl Harbor, but no one on Oahu appeared to have taken any notice.

The Americans didn't listen either when Mountbatten pointed out that the Japanese had a tradition of launching wars with a surprise attack. Instead, George Marshall, the US army's chief of staff, assured Washington that "the island of Oahu, due to its fortification, its garrison, and its physical characteristics, is believed to be the strongest fortress in the world".



Billionaire heiress Doris Duke with her husband in Hawaii

On his lawyer's advice, Edgar Rice Burroughs, the bestselling author of the *Tarzan* novels, was living in a hotel bungalow on Waikiki beach while finalising a divorce from his wife in California. And Doris Duke, the billionaire tobacco heiress, had built a magnificent holiday home near the volcanic cone of Diamond Head, on the other side of Honolulu from Pearl Harbor.

It wasn't only influential Americans who found themselves on the Pacific island. In September 1941, Lord Mountbatten – then serving as captain of the HMS *Illustrious* – paid a flying visit to

WARNING SIGNS

At the same time, the Americans were aware of the Japanese threat. As November 1941 turned to December, Japanese forces in the Pacific began to destroy their signal codes and change their radio call signs – a sure sign that something was about to happen somewhere. The Americans responded by sending squadrons of US warplanes forward to their military bases at Wake Island and Midway to await events.

The short-range fighters had to be transported by aircraft carrier, which meant that no carriers were available to protect the battleships nearer home. This, in turn, meant that the great ships were safer in harbour than out at sea. Admiral Husband Kimmel, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, understood perfectly well that his battleships in Pearl Harbor would be sitting ducks in the event of an attack, but it couldn't be helped if no aircraft carriers were available. The ships would at least have the protection of the anti-aircraft guns on shore.

In any case, the forthcoming Japanese operations were surely not aimed at Pearl Harbor. Vice-Admiral William Pye, who commanded the harbour's battle force, spoke for most when he assured Kimmel on 6 December: "The Japanese will not go to war with the United States. We are too big, too powerful and too strong."

Kimmel himself agreed that the idea was unlikely. "At no time did I consider that an air attack was any more than a

possibility under the conditions that we had out there," he later recalled. "What the events of a war might bring forth was quite a different thing."

Like Lieutenant-General Walter Short, his opposite number in the army, Kimmel had given little thought to the chances of being attacked without a declaration of war. If nothing else, the Japanese had their hands full in China without taking on the US as well. Convinced that they would have more sense, Kimmel had arranged to play golf with Short on the morning of Sunday 7 December.

Back at Schofield Barracks, the sprawling complex north of Pearl Harbor, Private James Jones of the US army wasn't thinking about war either. He was still seeking the perfect idea – a rattling good concept for the novel that would make his name. Hunched over his typewriter in the first week of December 1941, he peered out of the window at the clear skies and wondered when inspiration was going to strike. ●

Convinced the Japanese would have more sense than to attack, Kimmel had arranged to play golf



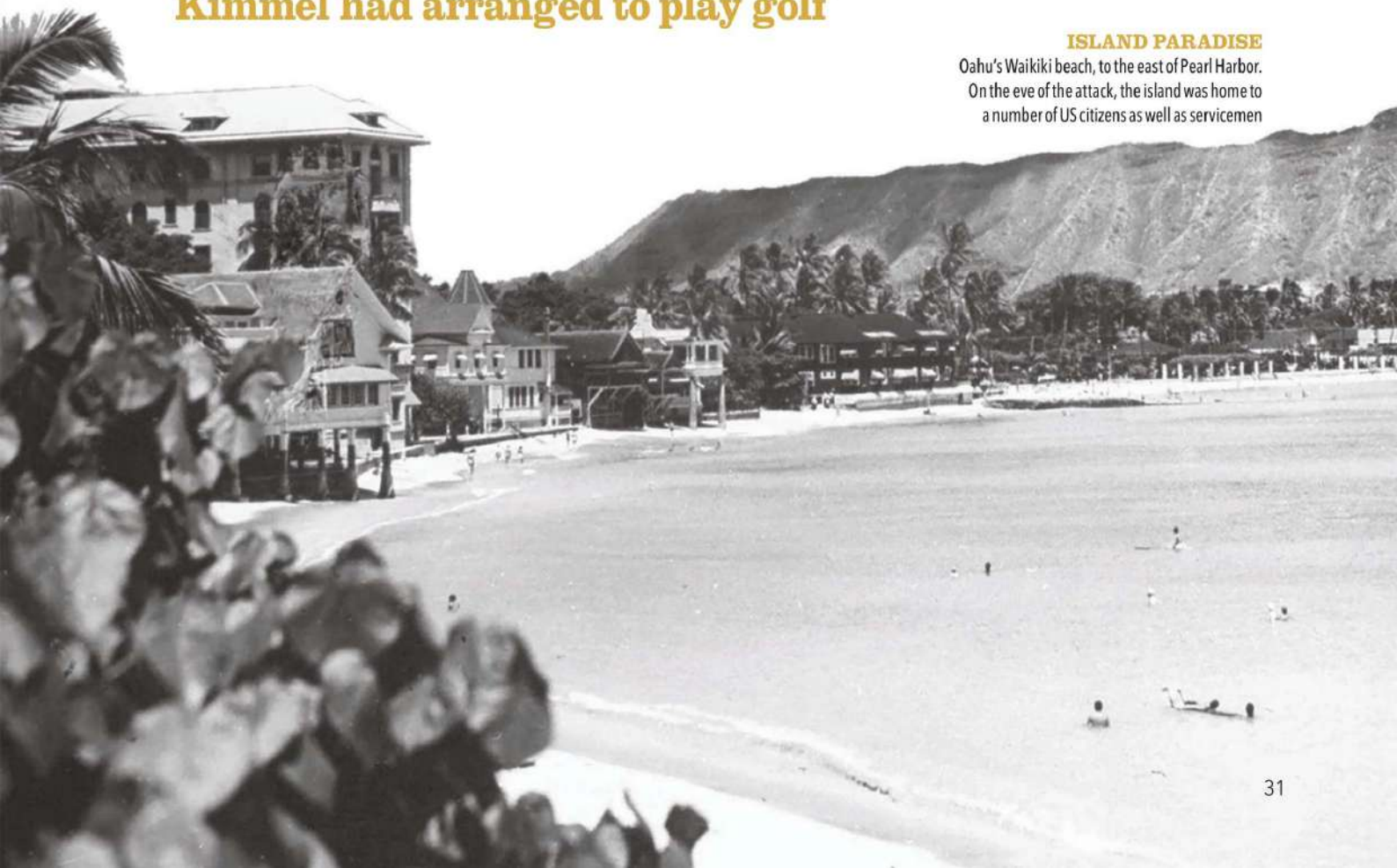
On shore leave in 1940, servicemen pose for photos with a Hawaiian girl



US sailors off the coast of Hawaii. Most of those stationed there were not expecting a strike

ISLAND PARADISE

Oahu's Waikiki beach, to the east of Pearl Harbor. On the eve of the attack, the island was home to a number of US citizens as well as servicemen





THE ATTACK

A detailed anatomy of the attack – from
the first Japanese plans for a surprise raid
to Roosevelt's grave declaration of war

BY GAVIN MORTIMER

UP IN FLAMES

The forward magazine of the USS *Shaw* explodes during the second wave of the strike on Pearl Harbor

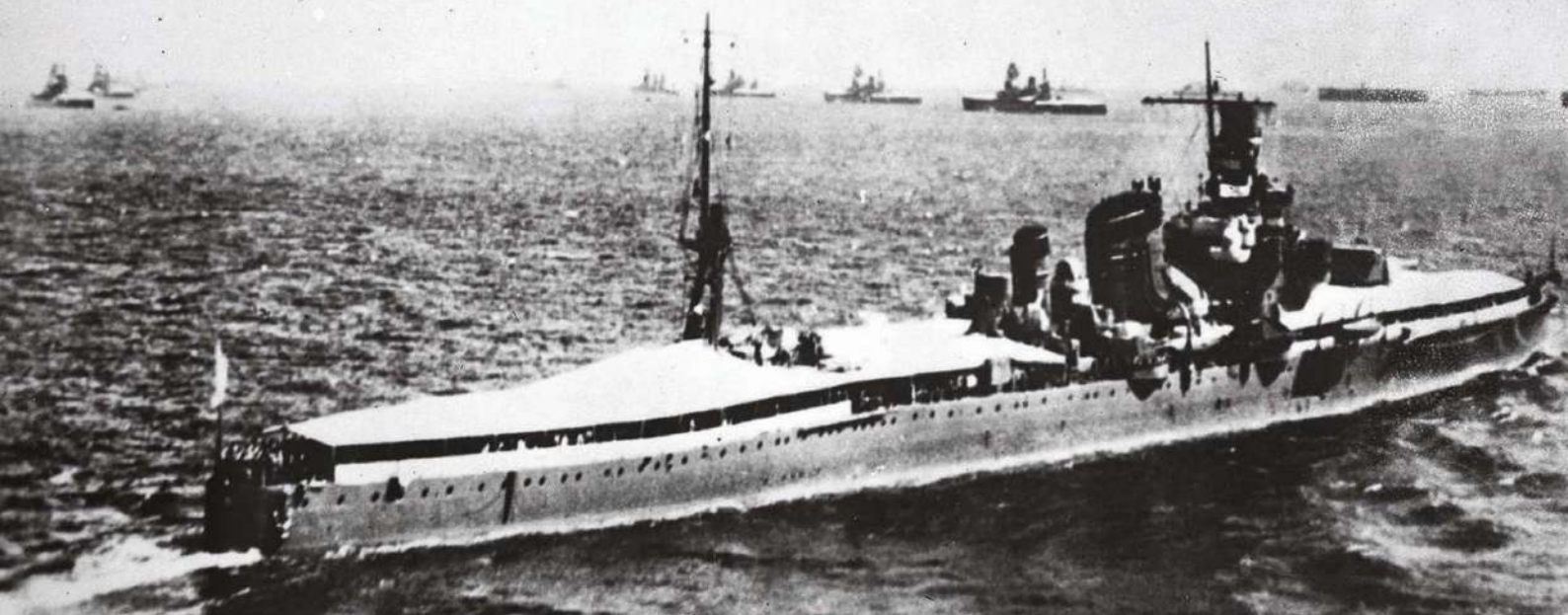
COURTESY OF THE NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND-NH 86118



PREPARATION

LINE OF FIRE

Japanese navy planes fly above warships in December 1941. Tokyo's planners called for a "vigorous" attack on Pearl Harbor



APRIL/MAY 1940

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, first conceives the idea of attacking Pearl Harbor "to give a fatal blow to the enemy fleet".

7 JANUARY 1941

In his cabin aboard the battleship *Nagato* in Hiroshima Bay, Yamamoto composes a letter to Admiral Koshiro Oikawa, navy minister, in which he writes that a conflict with the US and Britain is "inevitable". Therefore, says Yamamoto, "we should do our very best at the outset of the war with the United States... to decide the fate of the war on the very first day". This would be best achieved by a "vigorous" attack on Pearl Harbor.

27 JANUARY

Joseph Grew, the US ambassador to Japan, wires Washington with a warning he's received from multiple sources that, in the event of conflict, the Japanese will "attempt a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor using all of their military facilities".

1 FEBRUARY

US naval intelligence officers inform Admiral Husband E Kimmel – the new commander-in-chief of the US fleet – of Grew's warning, but add that they "place no credence in these rumours".

27 MARCH

A young Japanese diplomat called Tadashi Morimura arrives in Honolulu aboard the liner *Nitta Maru*. In reality he is Takeo Yoshikawa, the Japanese navy's top intelligence agent, and his orders are to "report by diplomatic code the daily status of the US fleet and its bases".

12 MAY

By now, Yoshikawa has gained a comprehensive knowledge of the US fleet in Pearl Harbor and knows the identity and location of the battleships.

24 JULY

As Yamamoto refines the tactics for the attack on Pearl Harbor, diplomatic talks between the US and Japan continue. President Roosevelt tells Japan that, if they agree not to occupy Indochina,

he will ensure their access to the region's rice and minerals. The proposal is ignored and, in response to the Japanese occupation, on 26 July Roosevelt freezes all Japanese assets in America. (Japan officially rejects FDR's proposal on 6 August.)

24 SEPTEMBER

At a top secret naval conference in Japan, chaired by admirals Shigeru Fukudome and Matome Ugaki, the date to attack Pearl Harbor is discussed. It is agreed that a Sunday would be the best day, to catch the Americans unawares, and 23 November is pencilled in – but only if the First Air Fleet is operationally ready.

24 SEPTEMBER

The Japanese consulate in Honolulu receives a message from Tokyo asking for a grid of the exact locations of ships in Pearl Harbor, and in particular to "make mention of the fact when there are two or more vessels alongside the same wharf". The message is intercepted by US intelligence through its 'Magic'

GETTY IMAGES-POPPERFOTO



PIER REVIEW

Vessels from the Pacific Fleet docked in Hawaii in October 1940. Tokyo gathered intelligence on the daily status of the ships



Top Japanese intelligence agent Takeo Yoshikawa arrived in Honolulu disguised as a diplomat

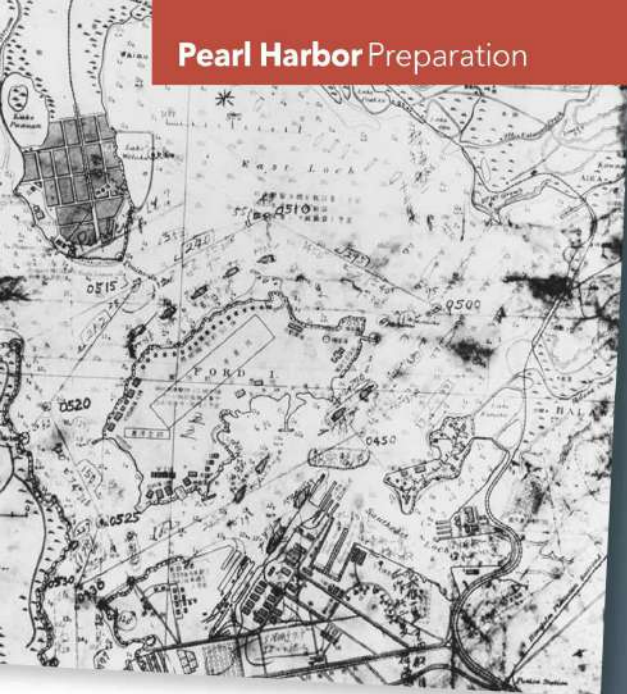


US ambassador Joseph C Grew with Japanese diplomat Kichisaburō Nomura in 1940



A cartoon satirises Roosevelt's freeze on all Japanese assets in 1941





A map of Pearl Harbor recovered from a Japanese submarine after the attack

programme, which allows it to decode Japan's diplomatic dispatches.

9 OCTOBER

Though the Americans have broken Japanese codes, it still takes time to translate the messages, and the Japanese dispatch sent on 24 September isn't decoded for a fortnight. The message is dubbed the 'bomb plot' by US intelligence, but dismissed as "a device to reduce the volume of radio traffic". Neither Admiral Kimmel nor Lieutenant General Walter Short – the military commander responsible for the defence of US military installations in Hawaii – is informed of the message.

3 NOVEMBER

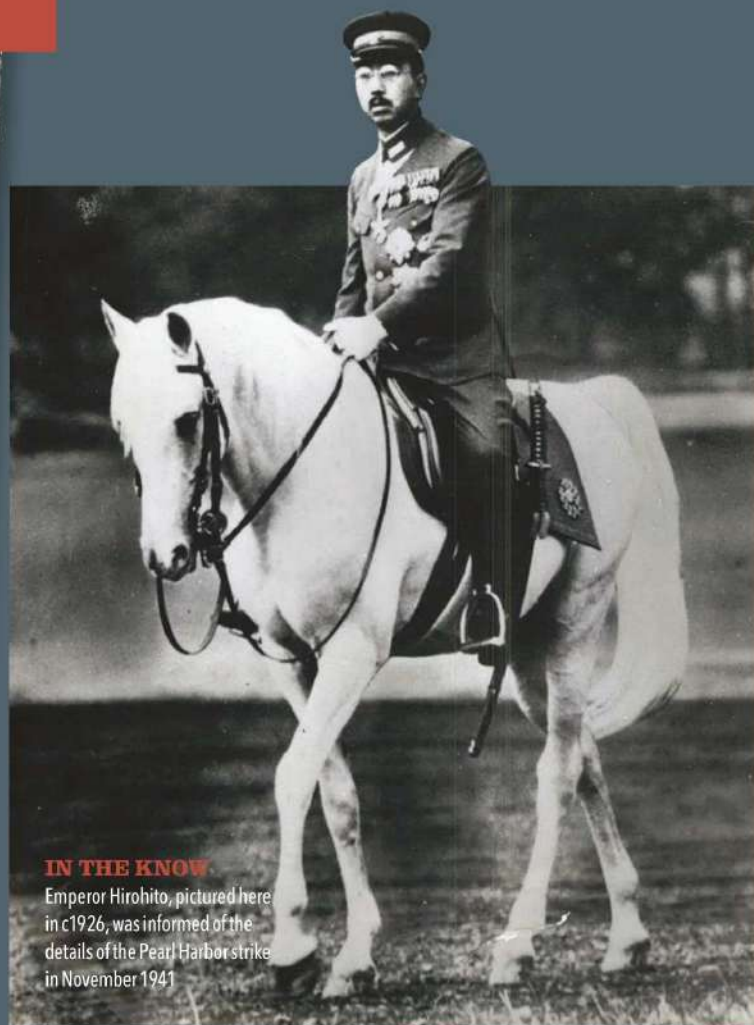
Admiral Osami Nagano, chief of the Imperial Japanese Naval General Staff, is received by Emperor Hirohito in the Imperial Palace, and discloses the details of the impending raid on Pearl Harbor.

4 NOVEMBER

Yamamoto has decided on the date of the attack, codenamed 'Operation Hawaii', and informs Ugaki that X-Day will be Sunday 7 December.

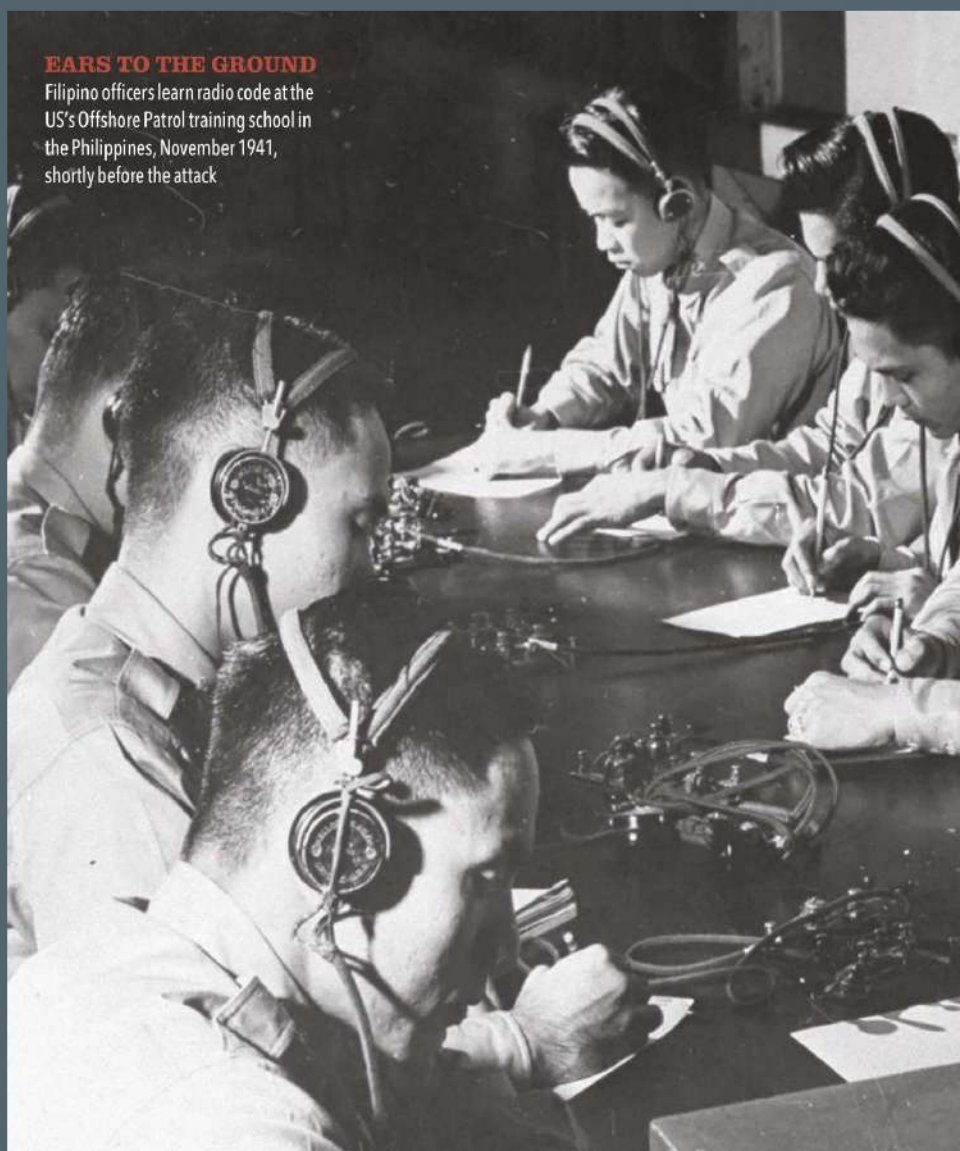
15 NOVEMBER

Tokyo instructs its Honolulu consulate that, owing to the deteriorating relations between Japan and the US, the "ships in harbour report" should be made twice weekly. In addition, the cable urges the consulate to "take extra care to maintain secrecy". US intelligence decodes the message but fails to attach any importance to its disturbing contents.



IN THE KNOW

Emperor Hirohito, pictured here in c1926, was informed of the details of the Pearl Harbor strike in November 1941



EARS TO THE GROUND

Filipino officers learn radio code at the US's Offshore Patrol training school in the Philippines, November 1941, shortly before the attack

COURTESY OF THE NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND-NARA-80-G-413507/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



GETTY IMAGES

Roosevelt (centre, far side of table)
with government colleagues in c1941

“An air attack on Hawaii! A dream come true. What will the people at home think when they hear?”



20 NOVEMBER

After talks lasting several months, the Japanese hand US secretary of state Cordell Hull their final proposition, which he likens to “an ultimatum”. Tokyo demands a required amount of oil, an end to the freeze on its assets and the discontinuation of aid to China, and in return promises only the partial withdrawal of troops from Indochina.

22 NOVEMBER

The last of the Japanese task force arrives in the remote Hitokappu Bay on the island of Etorofu, in the Sea of Okhotsk, north-east of Japan. Admiral Chūichi Nagumo, commander of the navy’s First Air Fleet, has yet to reveal the reason for their presence.

23 NOVEMBER

Before the captains and staffs of the task force, Admiral Nagumo declares: “Our mission is to attack Pearl Harbor.” He then describes details of the operation, which will entail a two-wave assault featuring more than 350 aircraft, aiming to deliver an “all-out fatal blow”.

25 NOVEMBER

At midday in Washington DC (6.30am Pearl Harbor time), FDR tells a meeting of his war council that he expects the Japanese to strike somewhere, because they are “notorious for making an attack without warning”.

26 NOVEMBER

On the same day that the US secretary of state delivers to Tokyo what is dubbed the “Hull note” – a final demand that Japan withdraw from Indochina and China – the imperial task force sails from Hitokappu Bay bound for Pearl Harbor, 3,500 miles to the east. It is comprised of six aircraft carriers, two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, two battleships, nine destroyers and eight tankers (the 23 fleet submarines and five midget subs sail separately). One seaman, Iki Kuramoto, writes in his diary: “An air attack on Hawaii! A dream come true. What will the people at home think when they hear the news?”



27 NOVEMBER

Kimmel and Short receive a 'war warning' from Washington, in which they are informed that Japan has ignored their final demands and that talks now "appear to be terminated". The prospect of an attack is therefore highly probable. Short believes the most likely form of attack will be a sabotage operation, and he orders all aircraft to be massed on their airfields in order to prevent such an act.

5 DECEMBER

08:10

The aircraft carrier USS *Lexington*, accompanied by three heavy cruisers, departs Pearl Harbor to ferry marine dive bombers to Midway. Now, none of the three carriers of the Pacific Fleet remain at Pearl.

15:00

The destroyer USS *Ralph Talbot* makes underwater contact with a submarine five miles off Pearl Harbor. Permission to depth charge the unidentified submarine is denied by senior officers, who declare it is simply a blackfish. "If this is a blackfish," comments the skipper of the *Ralph Talbot*, "it has a motorboat up its stern!"

6 DECEMBER

02:30

[08:00 in Washington] US officials begin receiving the first instalments of a 14-part message from Tokyo in response to recent talks.

11:30

The Japanese task force, fewer than 600 miles from its target, swings south at a speed of 24 knots. The carrier *Akagi* signals a message from Admiral Yamamoto: "The rise and fall of the empire depends upon this battle. Every man will do his duty."

13:00

Takeo Yoshikawa has spent the morning making a final surveillance of the US fleet at anchor, and files a report to Tokyo in which he states that "there are no signs of barrage balloon equipment", and nor can he see any anti-torpedo nets protecting the battleships.

16:30

[22:00 Washington time] Thirteen of the 14 parts of the Japanese message have been decoded by US intelligence and are delivered to FDR at the White House. The president reads them in the company of his closest advisor, Harry Hopkins, and concludes: "This means war." The 14th and final part has not yet been sent by the Japanese.

ALAMY/HAWAII STATE ARCHIVES DIGITAL COLLECTIONS-PP-55-2-029

LUCKY ESCAPE

The aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* was dispatched from Pearl Harbor to take marine dive bombers to Midway

"The empire's rise and fall depends on this battle," declared Yamamoto. "Every man will do his duty"



SITTING DUCKS

American Boeing P-26 'Peashooter' fighters parked alongside a squadron of Douglas B-18 bombers at Hickam Field, Hawaii, 1940

FRONTLINE STORIES



Shigeru Fukudome

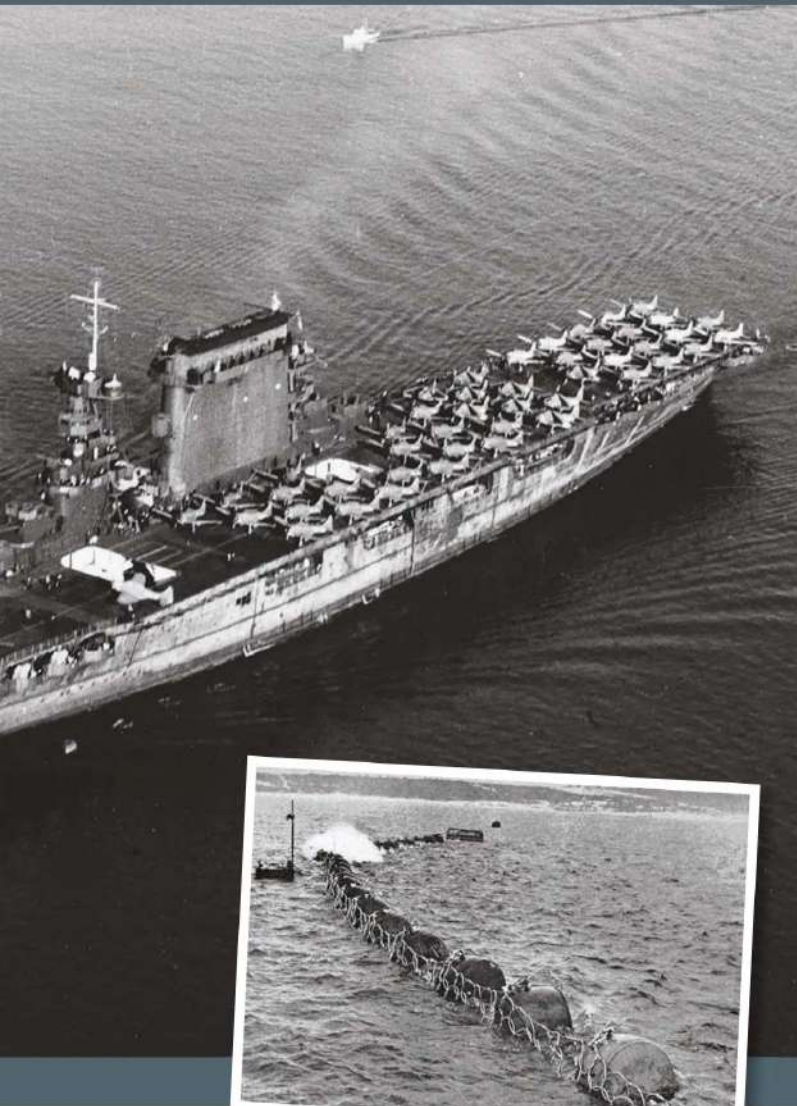
The naval supremo

Rear-Admiral Shigeru Fukudome served as Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's chief of staff from 1940 until April 1941. He said the idea of attacking Pearl Harbor was first mooted in early 1940. "[Yamamoto] had studied the attack plan strenuously and thoroughly," he told his US captors in 1945. "His confidence was so great that he once told me: 'If this plan should fail, it would mean defeat in the war.' He would not have taken such a risk if he had not been fully confident of success."

Fukudome didn't sail with the task force, but he tracked their progress from naval staff HQ, ready to order them back to Japan if the element of surprise was lost en route to Hawaii. "The general attitude was to take no more chances than absolutely necessary," he explained. "If there was any element of doubt or if things did not go according to plan, the main objective was to get the task force home."

But the voyage did go according to plan, and the day before the attack, the fleet received the coded message to attack: "Climb Mount Niitaka." The day chosen for the attack, a Sunday, was deliberate, said Fukudome. "A number of Japanese spies were working in Hawaii at the time. Their information was that the US fleet usually spent most of the week training at sea and returned to Pearl Harbor on Saturdays, and the crews rested on Sunday. To make our attack most effective, we chose Sunday, when the fleet would normally be at anchor."

Nonetheless, Fukudome admitted, it was neither spies nor surprise that most aided the Japanese, but luck. "We use the term 'God's help' to describe the luck we had at the time," he said. "We were really lucky: the plan was kept secret until the very last moment; we were able to refuel our ships on schedule; all of the American battleships were at anchor."



Japanese spy Yoshikawa reported a lack of sufficient anti-torpedo nets – like those here – protecting the US fleet



FALSE FRIENDS

Japanese diplomats Kichisaburō Nomura (centre) and Saburō Kurusu (right) are welcomed in the US for talks a few days before the attack

20:00

Lieutenant-Colonel George Bicknell of the navy intelligence office at Pearl receives a telephone call from the US air force in Hawaii, informing him that a flight of American B-17 bombers is scheduled to arrive from the mainland early the next day, and asking him to ensure that the local radio station, KGMB, is on the air all night “so the planes can home in on [its] signal”.

22:00

Commander Minoru Genda, one of the architects of the attack plan, rises from a nap and makes his way to the deck of the *Akagi*, where mechanics are tuning up the first-wave aircraft. Once on the bridge, he feels “very refreshed, as if all the uncertainties were cleared away”.

22:30

Three sailors from the battleship *West Virginia* are enjoying a night on the town in a venue called the Monkey Bar. Jack Miller, 20-year-old Clifford Olds and Frank Kosa have their photo taken by a barmaid, who then unsuccessfully tries to sell the snap to the sailors.

23:00

General Short and Lieutenant-Colonel Kendall Fielder, his intelligence officer, leave a charity dinner-dance with their wives. On their way home, they drive past an illuminated Pearl Harbor, and Short remarks: “What a target that would make!”

23:30–00:00

The Japanese begin releasing their five midget submarines from the mother submarines, seven miles from Pearl Harbor. The 78ft vessels are crewed by two men, carry two torpedoes each, and are able to operate in the shallow waters of the harbour, unlike conventional submersibles. None of the crew members are expected to survive, and they have written farewell letters to their families and said formal goodbyes to their comrades.

“What a target that would make,” remarked General Short as he drove past a lit-up Pearl Harbor

The deck of Japanese aircraft carrier *Akagi*, the flagship of the Pearl Harbor attack force



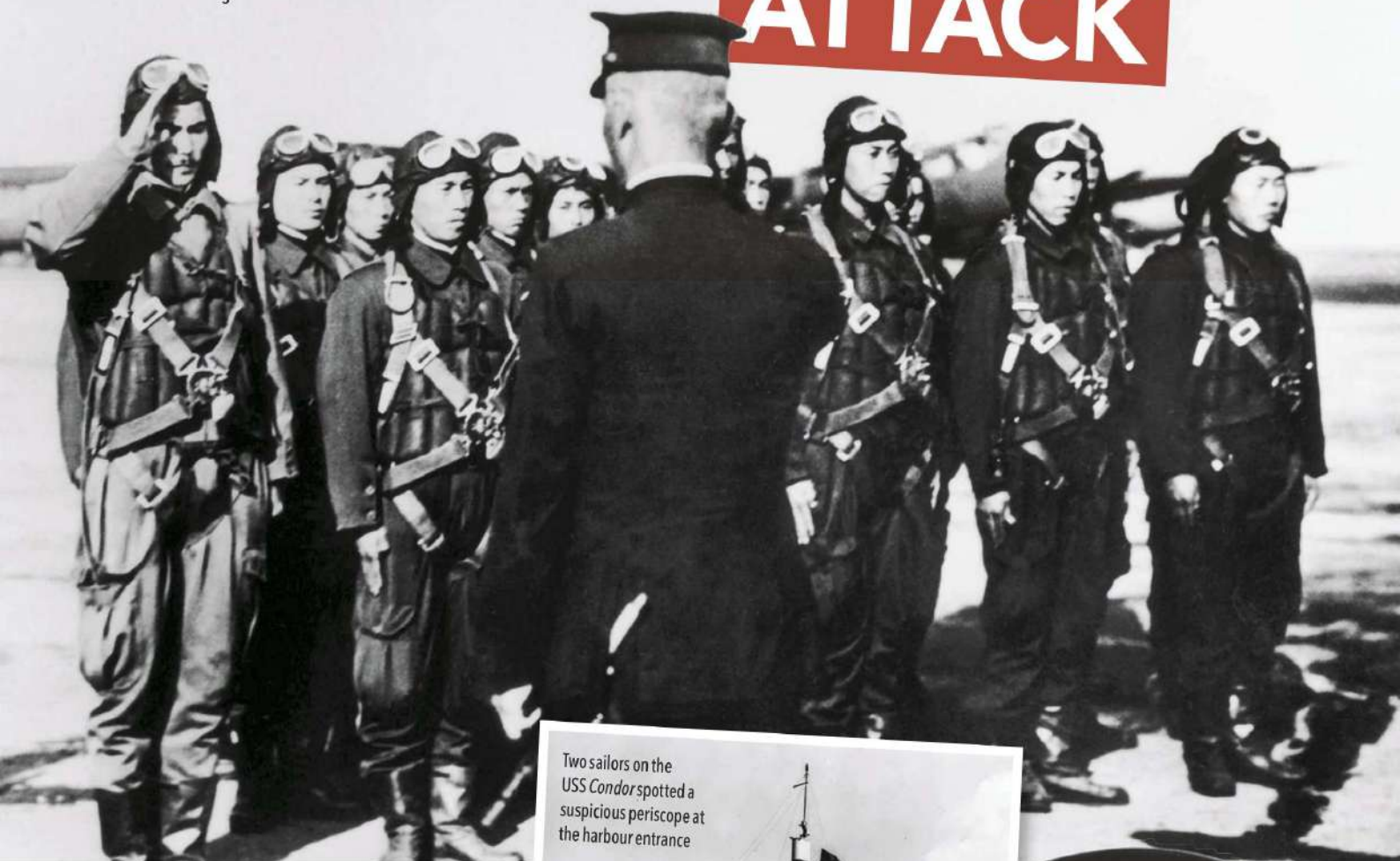
UNDER A CLOUD

B-17 bombers soar through the sky. Pearl Harbor's navy intelligence officers were awaiting the arrival of similar aircraft on 7 December

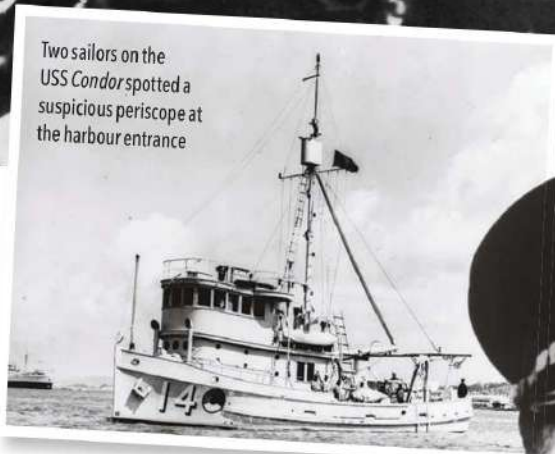
DAY OF THE ATTACK

EVE OF BATTLE

Japanese pilots receive their final instructions on the morning of the assault



Two sailors on the USS *Condor* spotted a suspicious periscope at the harbour entrance



7 DECEMBER

02:00

[07:30 *Washington*] The 14th and final part of the Japanese message arrives, stating that, in light of the attitude of the American government, Japan “cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations”.

03:42

On the deck of the minesweeper USS *Condor*, Ensign RC McCloy and Quartermaster BC Uttrick spot something in the water two miles south of the entrance to Pearl Harbor. “That’s a periscope, sir,” says Uttrick when asked his opinion. “There aren’t supposed to be any subs in this area.” McCloy reports his sighting – probably one of the midget subs – to the destroyer USS *Ward*.

05:00

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, tasked with leading the first wave of the aerial attack, meets Lieutenant Commander Shigeharu Murata, considered the torpedo ace of the Japanese air fleet, at breakfast. “Good morning, Commander,” said Murata. “Honolulu sleeps.” Asking how Murata can be sure the Americans suspect nothing, Fuchida is told: “The Honolulu radio plays soft music. Everything is fine.”



Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, who led the aerial attack’s first wave



05:30

Two single-engine Zero reconnaissance seaplanes take off from the task force to reconnoitre the target.

06:00

Dawn is less than an hour away and the Japanese fleet is nearly at the launching sector, 220 miles from Hawaii. Admiral Nagumo tells Commander Minoru Genda: "I have brought the task force successfully to the point of attack. From now on, the burden is on your shoulders and the rest of the flying group."

06:05

The crews of the first wave climb into their aircraft aboard the carrier *Akagi*. As Fuchida approaches his high-level bomber, a crew member presents him with a hand-crafted white scarf. "We would like you to carry this to Pearl Harbor on our behalf," he tells Fuchida, who wraps the gift around his helmet.

06:20

Of the 185 planes of the first wave, all but two take to the air successfully, and on Fuchida's signal the 43 fighters, 49 high-level bombers, 51 dive bombers and 40 torpedo planes set course for Hawaii.

06:25


As soon as the first wave is airborne, the carriers' crews begin raising the second wave of planes to the flight deck on elevators.

06:28

Washington believes the 14th part of the Japanese message is the trigger for some form of attack, and warnings are sent to the Caribbean and the Philippines. Owing to adverse atmospheric conditions, however, it is not possible to communicate the warning to Pearl Harbor in time.

COAST CLEAR

As dawn broke, two privates at the Opana station alerted superiors about an ominous blip on their radar screen – but their concerns were dismissed



Fuchida was so moved by the scene at 9,800 feet that he whispered, "O glorious dawn for Japan!"



FINAL WORD

An image from a Japanese newsreel showing pilots receiving their last instructions before taking off to attack

FRONTLINE STORIES



Iyozo Fujita
The fighter pilot

Born in November 1917, Sub-Lieutenant Iyozo Fujita graduated from the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy in 1938. In September 1941, he was assigned to the aircraft carrier *Sōryū* as a Zero fighter pilot.

On 7 December, Fujita was part of the 167-strong second wave commanded by Fusata Iida, whose target was the Kaneohe base. "My one thought was to do as good a job as I could and hope to God I would get through it all alive," he later recalled.

"The night before the attack, I could not sleep," Fujita remembered. "I drank six bottles of beer but I couldn't get drunk, I couldn't get sleepy. I was awake all night until the morning came."

On the day itself, Fujita changed into new clothing, so that, in the samurai tradition, he would go into battle clean. He then climbed into the cockpit of his fighter plane holding a photograph of his dead parents. As his fleet approached Hawaii, tension increased among the pilots – many of whom, like Fujita, had never flown a combat mission.

Fujita strafed the airbase and took a burst of ground fire in his left wing. Also hit was Iida's aircraft, bullets ripping open his fuel tank. "Iida turned and saluted me, then pointed to his mouth and shook his head. This meant he had no more fuel," said Fujita. "Then he waved goodbye." Iida deliberately launched his plane towards the ground, vanishing into the thick smoke.

Fujita's flight engaged in a dogfight with two American fighters before the Japanese broke off and returned to the task force. With his engine sputtering and his oil pressure almost at zero, Fujita nursed his plane onto the deck of *Sōryū*. "I felt very relieved," he recalled. "It was good, and that's all. When you're fighting in a war, the way you think is very simple."

06:40

The first shots of the day are fired by the USS destroyer *Ward* when it spots a midget submarine entering Pearl Harbor through the open anti-torpedo net gates. Confident the vessel has been sunk, the *Ward's* commander, Lieutenant William Outerbridge, signals at 06:53: "We have attacked, fired upon and dropped depth charges upon a submarine operating in defensive sea area."

07:00

Admiral Kimmel is dressing for his round of morning golf with General Short when he is informed of Outerbridge's message. He dismisses it as just another of the "false reports of submarines in the outlying area".

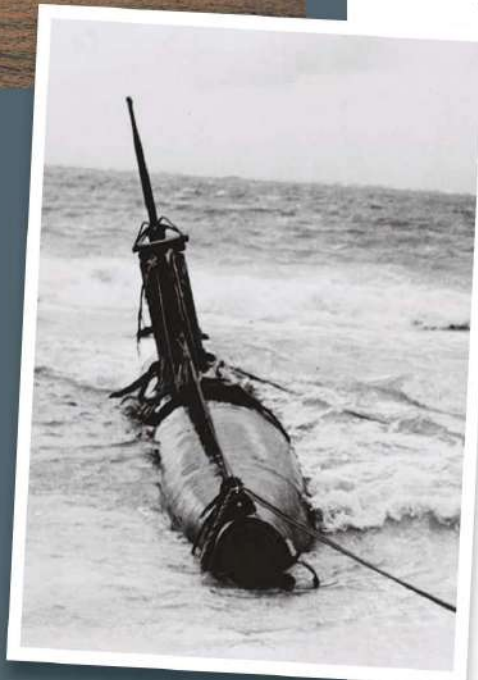
07:02

Dawn breaks as the first wave streaks towards Pearl Harbor. Mitsuo Fuchida is so moved by the scene at 9,800 feet that he whispers, "O glorious dawn for Japan!"

Down below, at the Opana mobile radar station on the northern tip of Hawaii, privates Joseph Lockard and George Elliott see something remarkable on their plotting board. "I was on the scope and Lockard was looking over my shoulder," recalled Elliott. "We could see a blip at 137 miles. We decided it was a large flight of planes coming in. I called in to the information centre, to a fellow named Joe McDonald. He told Lieutenant Kermit Tyler. Tyler said to forget it – it was probably a large formation of planes from the US to reinforce Hawaii."

07:05

The USS *Ward* detects the sound of another submarine and drops more depth charges, resulting three minutes later in the sight of a "black oil bubble 300 yards astern".



A Japanese midget submarine beached on Oahu after taking part in the attack. The photo was taken around 8 December

GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY OF THE NHHHC-NH 91332/SHUTTERSTOCK-AP



HEAVY SKIES

Mitsubishi fighter aircraft warming up on a carrier in the Pacific before the attack. A total of 353 Japanese planes took part

07:15

The second wave begins leaving the decks of the six carriers, led by Lieutenant Commander Shigekazu Shimazaki, whose 54 horizontal bombers will attack the airfields at Hickam, Kaneohe Bay and Ford Island. Lieutenant Saburo Shindo leads a force of 36 Zero fighters, while the 78 dive bombers are under the command of Lieutenant Commander Takashige Egusa, with instructions to destroy the US fleet. Only one aircraft fails to take off, and the 167-strong second wave means that 350 aircraft are now heading for Pearl Harbor.

At the controls of one of the torpedo bombers is Hirata Matsumura, who has mixed emotions. Proud to be part of the strike force, he nonetheless recalls with affection his holiday in the US five years earlier. "America was wonderful and I liked Americans," he reflected. "Friendly, open-hearted and very frank. I never thought or imagined we would go to war."

07:35

One of the two Japanese scout planes that took off from the task force at 05:30 breaks radio silence over Pearl Harbor to report to Nagumo: "Enemy formation at harbour: nine battleships, one heavy cruiser, six light cruisers are in the harbour." Before heading back to the carrier, it also radios a weather report.

07:35

The other scout plane reports no enemy vessels in Lahaina Anchorage, south-east of Pearl Harbor, and then sets off on an unsuccessful search for the three US aircraft carriers of the Pacific Fleet.

07:40

Fuchida gives a triumphant shout as he spots through his binoculars the Hawaiian mountains below. They have arrived without detection and so,

as arranged, Fuchida fires one flare from his rocket pistol to signal that the slow torpedo bombers should lead the attack, followed by the dive and high-level bombers. But believing some pilots have not seen the flare, Fuchida fires a second one, thereby sewing confusion among the pilots as to the strike plan. The dive bombers swoop to attack instead of letting the torpedo bombers draw first blood. Fuchida's anger at the mix-up is offset by the sudden parting of the clouds so that the target is finally clearly visible.



The Aichi E13A, a reconnaissance seaplane used by Japanese scouts for the raid

GETTY IMAGES/WIKIMEDIA-PUBLIC DOMAIN

THE RAID BEGINS



BURNING THE BOATS

Flames pour from the bow of the USS Nevada and, behind her, the USS Shaw. The smoke on the left is from the destroyers Cassin and Downes

07:48

The first target struck by the Japanese is Kaneohe Bay, on the east coast of Oahu. The bay is home to a navy patrol seaplane base made up of three patrol squadrons, totalling 33 aircraft. Guy Avery, an aviation machinist mate third class, is dozing in his quarters when he hears the throb of engines. Reaching the window, he sees "Zeroes just beginning to fan out over the heart of the station and opening fire promiscuously".

07:49

In the west, over Pearl Harbor, Fuchida gives the signal to attack, "To, To, To" – the first syllable of *totsugekiseyo*: "charge". The message is received with great excitement by Yamamoto and Ugaki aboard the battleship *Nagato* in Japan's Inland Sea.

Firefighters tackle a burning PBV seaplane at Kaneohe Bay's navy patrol base, the first target hit



07:53

As he prepares to swoop on Pearl Harbor, Fuchida sends another signal: “*Tora! Tora! Tora!*” (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!) – the code word to confirm the enemy has been caught off-guard. Lieutenant Commander Shigeharu Murata signals for his flight of torpedo bombers to split, and one group heads for the west side of Pearl Harbor while the other flies for Battleship Row, where the *Arizona*, *California*, *Maryland*, *Nevada*, *Oklahoma*, *Tennessee* and *West Virginia* are moored, along with the repair ship *Vestal*, sitting next to the *Arizona*.

07:54

On board the USS *Shaw*, which is in an auxiliary floating drydock receiving adjustments to her depth-charge system, seaman Pat Ramsey gasps in astonishment: “A Japanese torpedo plane flew over, headed toward Battleship Row. I knew it was a torpedo plane because I could see it, [it was] that close. I was probably 50 feet or less from the Japanese pilot. He banked a little bit and looked out of his cockpit, and I saw him smiling.”

07:55

On board the light cruiser *Raleigh*, the officer of the deck summons the anti-aircraft crews to their stations on the assumption the approaching aircraft are US planes on a “routine air-raid drill”. The assumption is shattered by the explosion of a torpedo that floods the forward engine room. At the same time, on board the repair ship *Vestal*, the officer of the deck, Fred Hall, orders the quartermaster to sound general quarters. But the quartermaster is too dumbstruck to respond to the command. “Goddamn it,” yells Hall. “I said: ‘Sound general quarters!’ Those are Jap planes up there.”

07:57

Another light cruiser hit by a torpedo is the *Helena*, and also crippled by the same blast is the *Oglala*, moored alongside. The log of the *Helena* states: “At about 07:57 1/2, a series of three heavy explosions felt nearby. At about 07:58, ship rocked by violent explosion on starboard side.”

07:57

At the Ford Island command centre, Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey realises they are under Japanese attack when a bomb explodes in the hangar area. He sprints to the radio room and orders a message to be transmitted in plain English: “AIR RAID, PEARL HARBOR. THIS IS NOT DRILL!”

07:58

Admiral Kimmel receives word of the attack by telephone and rushes from his quarters still buttoning his white uniform. He stands on the lawn, joined by his neighbour, Mrs Earle, the wife of a naval officer. “The sky was full of enemy,” Kimmel said later. “I knew right away that something terrible was going on, that this was not a casual raid by just a few stray planes.” Mrs Earle glances at the admiral and notices that his face has turned “as white as the uniform he wore”.

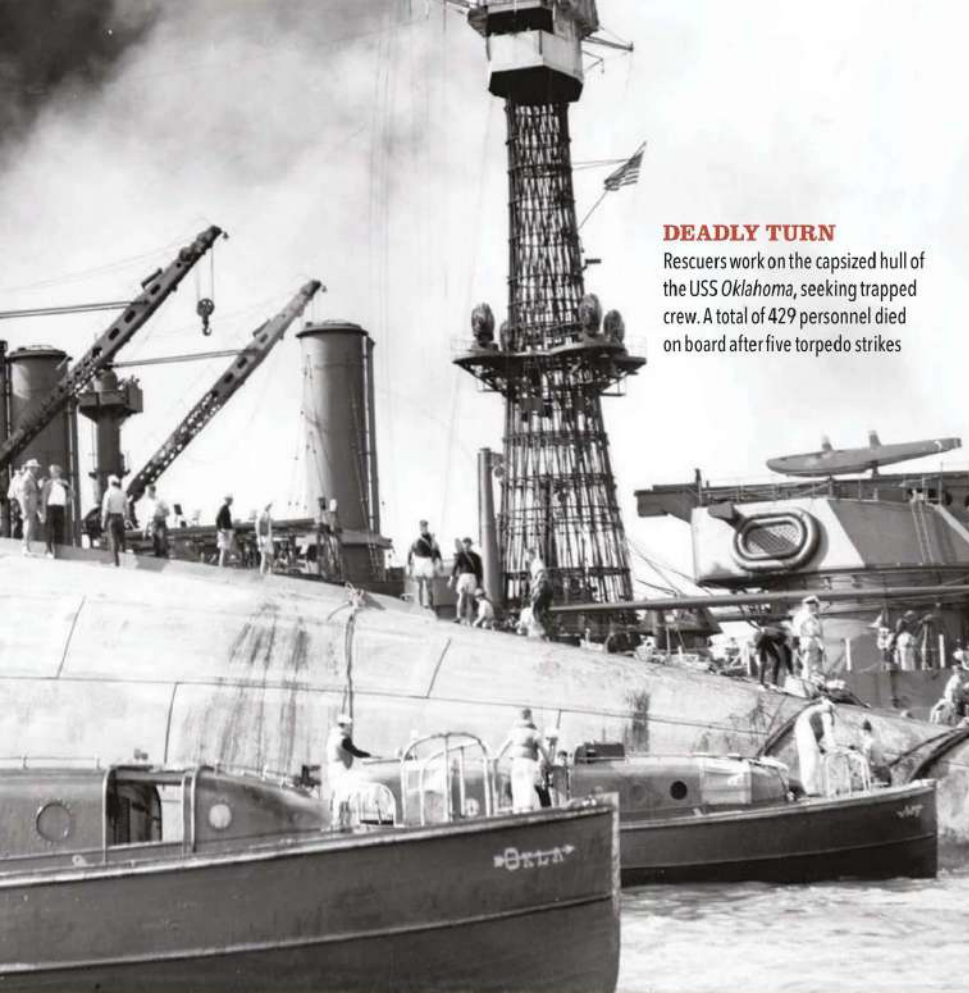


DIRECT HIT

In this image taken from a Japanese aircraft, a torpedo strikes the USS *West Virginia* while Japanese planes circle over Ford Island

COURTESY OF THE NHHC NARA-80-G-19941 & NHHC-NH 50930





DEADLY TURN

Rescuers work on the capsized hull of the USS *Oklahoma*, seeking trapped crew. A total of 429 personnel died on board after five torpedo strikes

**“It struck!” Murata reported.
“Torpedoed enemy battleships.
Serious damage inflicted”**



COOL HEAD

Lieutenant Annie Fox, head nurse at Hickam Field's station hospital, organised the scores of casualties who flooded into the facility following the attack



A c1942 poster of ‘Dorie’ Miller, who manned anti-aircraft guns without training and tended to the wounded, earning him the Navy Cross

08:00

Lieutenant Jinichi Goto has two battleships in his sights, the *Maryland* and the *Oklahoma*. “I was about 20 metres above the water when I released my torpedo,” he recalled. “As my plane climbed up after the torpedo was off, I saw that I was even lower than the crow’s nest of the great battleship. My observer reported a huge waterspout springing up from the ship’s location.”

Watching from the deck of the *Oklahoma* is 17-year-old George Smith, who has just finished his shift. “One plane came in, circled, came right down to us. The guy opened the hatch to his plane and dropped his torpedo, waved at me and took off,” Smith recalled. “The next thing I knew there was a big explosion.” Over the *Oklahoma*’s public address systems comes the call to arms: “Man your battle stations! This is no shit!”

08:00 onwards

From the first moments of the attack, Lieutenant Annie Fox, head nurse in the Station Hospital at Hickam Field, has been a model of calm authority. The 48-year-old organises the arrival of scores of casualties amid the Japanese onslaught. One bomb leaves a 30ft crater just 20 feet from the hospital wing. Fox will subsequently become the first US servicewoman to receive the Purple Heart medal, for her “coolness and efficiency and her fine example of calmness, courage, and leadership”.



SMOKING WRECK

The USS *Nevada*, beached and burning after being struck by Japanese bombs and torpedoes while fleeing Battleship Row



08:01

Lieutenant Commander Murata targets the battleship *West Virginia*, moored just behind the *Oklahoma*, and drops his 800kg torpedo with a sense of trepidation. He has been instrumental in making adjustments to the weapon's fins in order to produce more stability in the water, and he is delighted when his observer cries: "It struck!" Murata radios his report: "Torpedoed enemy battleships. Serious damage inflicted."

08:02

Gun crews on the *Nevada* shoot down an incoming Japanese plane, but moments later another aircraft releases its torpedo, which tears a hole in the battleship's port bow. "I felt a very sharp blow in the bottom of my feet," remembered Joseph Taussig Jr, anti-aircraft officer on the *Nevada*. "Maybe 20, 30, 40 seconds after that, I felt a very sharp blow in my thigh. The ship was being strafed. I looked down, and my left foot was under my left armpit. I eventually lost the leg."

08:03

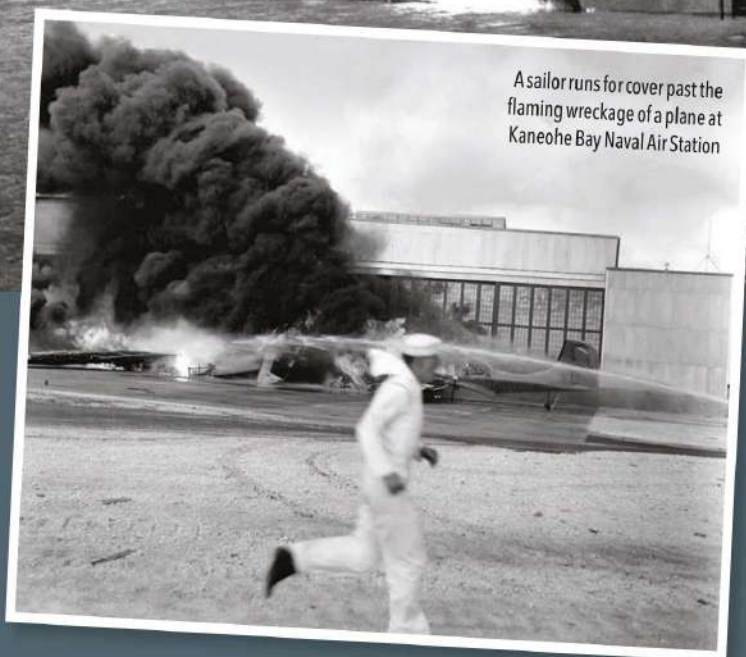
Japanese fighters and dive bombers continue to cause severe damage to other targets on Hawaii, and Lieutenant Commander Kakuichi Takahashi radios the task force command: "Bombed Ford Island, Hickam [airbase] and Wheeler [army airfield]. Terrible damage inflicted."

08:04

On board the 608ft-long USS *Arizona*, anchored at quay F7 on Battleship Row, is a crew of over 1,700. All are proud

to belong to a vessel that, with its dozen 14-inch guns and top speed of 21 knots, is regarded as one of the most lethal of its kind in the world. The fact that it's fuelled by gasoline and not the old-fashioned coal makes it all the more glamorous, but its 1.5 million gallons of fuel now turn the ship into a deathtrap.

Clyde Combs, a 19-year-old seaman first class on the *Arizona*, is doing his laundry in the chief's quarters, way up forward, when the first torpedo strikes. "I did a 100-yard dash aft to my battle station, which was in turret 3," he recalled, but as he runs another torpedo



A sailor runs for cover past the flaming wreckage of a plane at Kaneohe Bay Naval Air Station

PEARL HARBOR IN NUMBERS



55
JAPANESE
PERSONNEL KILLED



MINUTES
ATTACK TOOK:
117



1,177 SERVICEMEN KILLED DURING
THE ATTACK ON THE USS ARIZONA



15
AMERICAN VESSELS
SUNK OR DAMAGED



2,335
TOTAL US
PERSONNEL KILLED



188
US AIR CORPS AND
NAVY AIRCRAFT LOST

explodes. "A bomb hit turret 4 [on the starboard side of the quarterdeck], bounced off and went down an open provisions hatch. All our doors, hatches, everything, were open. This thing went off, probably on the fourth deck. It tore things up something terrible with all the doors open. All the lights went out. You couldn't breathe. There was smoke in there. The feeling you got was helplessness. You couldn't see, you couldn't hear, you were gasping, and you were grasping around there trying to figure out where you were."

08:06

Two torpedoes strike the USS *California* in quick succession. The flagship of Vice-Admiral Pye, second in rank to Kimmel, the *California* is moored singly in F3, and with an inspection due for Monday most of the vessel's manhole covers have been removed. "I was getting up, and the first torpedo knocked me on my butt," remembered John Leach, an aviation machinist's mate. Running topside in just a pair of shorts, he and another sailor take cover under the overhang of a gun turret. "A bomb exploded," said Leach. "I said, 'Let's get the hell out of here.'" But the sailor next to Leach is dead.

08:08

In total, the *West Virginia* is hit by six torpedoes and two bombs that rip away most of her port side. The battleship sinks rapidly but doesn't capsize, allowing most of the crew to escape, except those in the bottom. Among these are the three friends, Clifford Olds, 20, Ronald Endicott, 18, and Louis Costin, 21, all trapped in an airtight compartment in the ship's storeroom. Their frantic tapping to alert search teams will be heard for days after the attack. "At first, I thought it was a loose piece of rigging slapping against the hull," recalled Dick Fiske, a marine bugler. "Then I realised men were making that sound – taking turns making noise."

Cutting out the trapped sailors using oxy-acetylene torches would have risked a huge explosion, so in the end the difficult decision is taken to do nothing. When the battleship is raised six months later, salvage crews find the bodies of Endicott,

The USS *Arizona* burns fiercely following the explosion of its powder magazines



Olds and Costin in the storeroom, alongside a calendar with the days crossed off up to 23 December – a whole 16 days after the sinking.

08:10

On hearing the first bombs drop, General Short had assumed that the "navy was having some battle practice", but by 08:10 he has put into effect Alert No 3, warning against an all-out attack and even a possible invasion.

Admiral Kimmel, just arriving at his HQ, sees the *Arizona* "lift out of the water, then sink back down – way down". Closer to the scene is Roy Johnson, a navigator's assistant on the *Nevada*. "The *Arizona* blew up 50 feet ahead of us," he recalled. "It was the biggest, blackest, loudest noise I've heard in my life. If you've ever taken a firecracker, broken it in two and lit it to see it go up in smoke, that was what it was like." The bomb, dropped by Petty Officer Noboru Kanai, penetrates the *Arizona* near gun turret 2 and detonates in the forward magazine. From the neighbouring *Vestal*, Lieutenant Commander Harley Smart sees "the men on *Arizona* walking on deck and burning alive. They had their helmets on. Their clothes were all seared off. They were a ghostly crew as they walked out of those flames. And then they just dropped dead."



COURTESY OF THE NHHHC-NARA-80-G-K-13512/NHHHC-NH 97400/
NHHHC-NARA-80-G-32640/PUBLIC DOMAIN



Crew abandon the USS *California* at roughly 10:00 as oil burns in the water. The ship would fill with water and sink over the next three days

“They were a ghostly crew as they walked out of the flames. And then they just dropped dead”

VISION OF DESTRUCTION

The view along Battleship Row: on the left, the USS *California* lists to port after two torpedo strikes; in the distance are the *Maryland*, the capsized *Oklahoma* and the *Neosho*



FRONTLINE STORIES



Lauren Bruner

The injured crewman

A 21-year-old fire controlman third class aboard the USS *Arizona*, Lauren Bruner had spent Saturday evening on a first date with a young woman he'd been sweet on for months. A second date was arranged for the Sunday evening, and he was already looking forward to it when, at 07.55, the Japanese launched their attack. Bruner climbed to his battle station on the forward mast of the *Arizona* and began firing back. Around 15 minutes later, the battleship was hit by four 800kg bombs. “The ship was engulfed in flames,” recalled Bruner. “I and five others were located on the anti-aircraft gun director’s platform above the bridge when the forward powder magazine blew.”

Not only was Bruner trapped along with his crewmates, he had burns over 80 per cent of his body. “At that point, the only possibility to evacuate the ship was to dive in the water, which was 80 feet below and fully engulfed in flame,” he said. “That was not an option for survival.”

It seemed inevitable that the trapped men would join the 1,177 other crew killed aboard the *Arizona*, but then their plight was seen by Boatswain’s Mate Second Class Joe George on board the USS *Vestal*. A repair ship that had also been hit by Japanese bombs, the *Vestal* came alongside the blazing *Arizona* and George threw over a line to the stranded sailors 70 feet away. “We secured the line on the *Arizona* and each of us climbed hand over hand to the *Vestal*, even though we were severely burned,” said Bruner, who was the penultimate man to leave the *Arizona*. The climb across the burning water below was like “being roasted”, he recalled, and two of the six men subsequently died of their wounds. After several months in hospital Bruner returned to active service, but he never got to go on a second date with his sweetheart.



FRONTLINE STORIES



Myrtle Watson

The quick-thinking nurse

Only 82 military nurses were stationed in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. One of them was 27-year-old Lieutenant Myrtle Watson from Maryland. She was on duty on the orthopaedic ward at Schofield Hospital on what was expected to be a quiet Sunday morning shift. After breakfast, Watson and her fellow nurses wheeled some of the patients onto the second-storey porch so they could watch a football game about to begin. "As we stood on the porch looking out at the field, we heard the low sound of planes coming overhead," she recalled. Several of the patients waved at the aircraft, believing they were US aircraft on an exercise. Then they attacked. "They were so low we could see the Rising Sun," recalled Watson. "You know the pictures of the Japanese pilots with their scarves around their necks and bands around their foreheads? They were so close you could see that."

Watson and the other nurses rushed the patients back inside the ward. "I began cutting some of the guys out of traction and moving them under their beds," she said. "As the strafing was still going on, I piled mattresses around them, then climbed under the bed with them."

Soon the first casualties began arriving at the hospital – men suffering from an array of horrendous wounds. "Some men were missing arms and legs," said Watson. "The saddest and most depressing cases were the burns victims. Some of the men who were brought in were charred to a crisp... their bodies resembled strips of fried and partially burnt bacon."

For three days and nights, Watson worked tirelessly on the ward, her fortitude matched by the courage of her patients. Wards were awash with blood, and in some cases whisky was used when supplies of morphine ran out.



"It was awful – great ships were dying before my eyes. At first I didn't realise that men were dying too"



PUBLIC DOMAIN/GETTY IMAGES/ COURTESY OF THE
NHHCC-NARA-80-G-32492



GROUNDING

Curtiss P-40 Warhawks lie wrecked at Wheeler Field airbase, which was targeted to prevent a US air response

ON THE LOOKOUT

In a propaganda photo taken after the attack, a gun crew peer out from a sandbagged emplacement at Ford Island's seaplane base



08:10

[13:40 Washington time] Frank Knox, secretary of the US navy, informs President Roosevelt of the attack. FDR is in the Oval Office with his advisor, Harry Hopkins, who believes "there must be some mistake" because Japan would never launch such an attack. Roosevelt disagrees, saying it's "just the kind of unexpected thing the Japanese would do, and that at the very time they were discussing peace in the Pacific they were plotting to overthrow it".

08:12

From his War Plans Office, Admiral Kimmel sends a message to the entire Pacific Fleet: "Hostilities with Japan commenced with air raid on Pearl Harbor." Five minutes later, he sends another signal to his Patrol Wing Two: "Locate enemy force."

08:15

A fourth torpedo strikes the USS *Oklahoma* and the order is given to abandon ship. "Slowly, sickeningly, the *Oklahoma* began to roll over on her side, until finally only her bottom could be seen," said Mrs Earle, still watching from her front garden. "It was awful, for great ships were dying before my eyes. Strangely enough, at first I didn't realise that men were dying too." In all, 429 sailors and marines are killed aboard the *Oklahoma*, but 17-year-old George Smith manages to swim to safety.

08:18

The flight of B-17 bombers approach Hickam Field after a 14-hour journey from the US mainland. Not only are they attacked by Japanese fighters, but they also start taking ground fire from anti-aircraft crews, who mistake them for hostile planes. Incredibly, amid the maelstrom of fire, all but one of the B-17s manage to land.

08:20

A 'groan of anguish' escapes the lips of Kimmel as he is informed of the destruction to his fleet. Twenty minutes later, a spent bullet crashes through the glass of a window and strikes the admiral harmlessly on the breast of his white uniform. "It would have been more merciful had it killed me," he murmurs.



The attack on Wheeler Field, shown in an image taken from a Japanese newsreel

08:25

At Schofield Barracks on Wheeler Army Airfield, soldiers are fighting off the attackers in any way they can. Lieutenant Stephen Saltzman and Sergeant Lowell Klatt blaze away at a dive bomber with automatic rifles and manage to bring down the aircraft.

08:28

The destroyer USS *Aylwin* receives orders to put to sea having so far escaped the attack. A bomb drops close by as the vessel prepares to depart Pearl Harbor, but the *Aylwin* follows the USS *Helm* out of the danger zone and breaks into the open sea an hour later.

08:35

Also manoeuvring out of Pearl Harbor is the destroyer USS *Monaghan*. Its captain, Bill Burford, spots a midget submarine and rams the intruder, sucking it under his ship.

08:40

The second wave of Japanese aircraft is approaching Hawaii. "The scattered clouds gradually decreased, and I could see a part of the devil's island clearly," recalled Lieutenant Zenji Abe, a torpedo bomber. "A group of black puffs of smoke appeared to our right front, and then another group appeared quite near our formation, about 200 in all. Anti-aircraft fire! Except for scattered shots in China, it was the first time I had experienced that... I felt awful."

08:50

Lieutenant Commander Shigekazu Shimazaki leads the second wave into the attack. The Zero fighters peel off to attack Kaneohe, Hickam, Ford Island, Wheeler Field and Bellows Field. At the seaplane base at Kaneohe Bay, first hit an hour earlier, Aviation Machinist Avery watches the Japanese strafe anything that moves. "Particularly did they harass the firemen who were fighting the blazes among the squadron planes on the ramp."

08:50

At the same moment the second wave attacks, the *Nevada* starts its perilous voyage out of Pearl Harbor. Passing the devastated *Arizona*, the crew of the *Nevada* spot three sailors in the water and with the use of a line they are hauled aboard.

08:50

[14:20 Washington time] Cordell Hull receives Kichisaburō Nomura, Japan's ambassador to the US, who hands the secretary of state the 14th part of the message. He apologises for its late delivery, explaining that he had been instructed by Tokyo to deliver it at 13:00 but it had taken longer to decode than usual. Nomura, unaware of the attack on Pearl Harbor, is shaken when a furious Hull declares: "I have never seen a document more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions."

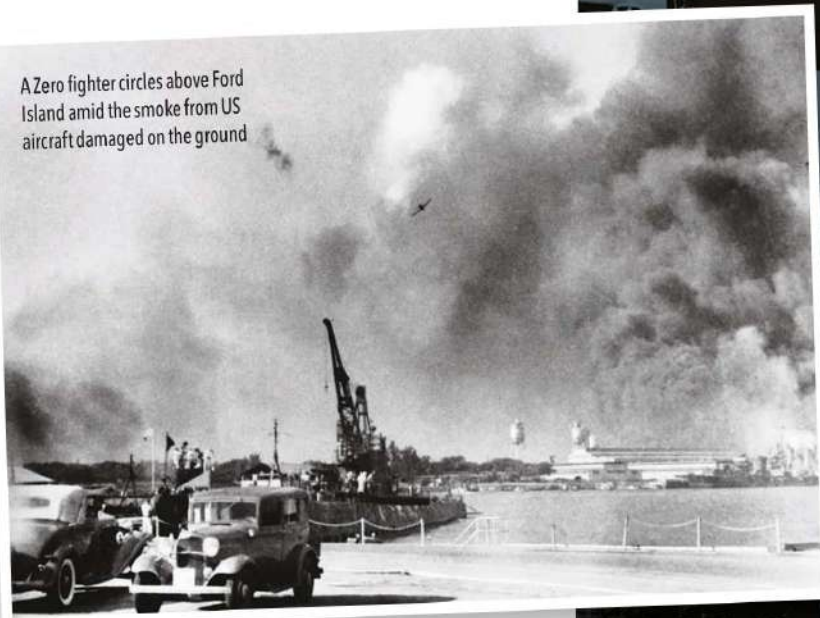


PLASTIC SMILES

Japanese diplomats Kichisaburō Nomura (left) and Saburō Kurusu (right) attend meetings in Washington a few days before the attack

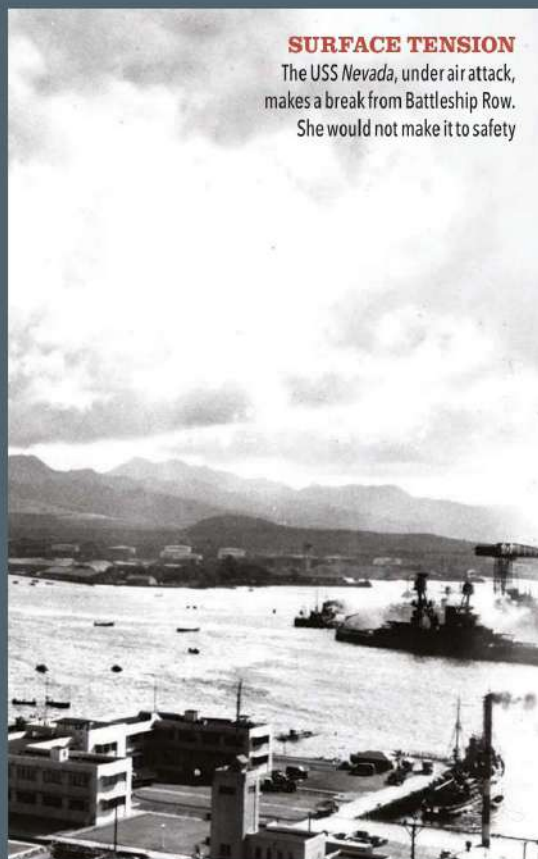
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A Zero fighter circles above Ford Island amid the smoke from US aircraft damaged on the ground





“Particularly did the Japanese harass the firemen fighting the blazes among the squadron planes”



SURFACE TENSION

The USS Nevada, under air attack, makes a break from Battleship Row. She would not make it to safety



IN THE DOCK

The wreckage of a Japanese midget submarine rammed by the captain of the USS Monaghan

A HEAVY RECKONING



TOWERING INFERNO

Sailors stand amid wrecked planes at the Ford Island Naval Air Station, watching as the USS *Shaw* explodes in the background

09:00–09:15

Kaneohe Bay is attacked by the flight led by Fusata Iida, who is shot down and killed, leaving Sub Lieutenant Iyozo Fujita in command. Re-forming the flight, he leads them towards Wheeler Field in search of fresh targets.

On the ground, Lieutenant Philip Rasmussen is one of a handful of pilots uninjured. “I ran down to the hangar line and it was chaos,” he said. “Ammunition was exploding in the hangars. Fires everywhere. An airplane would explode and in turn ignite the plane next to it. The only planes not burning were a few Curtiss P-36s. I jumped into one and got it started.”

09:08

In his dive bomber, Zenji Abe is looking for a target. “My altitude was 3,000 metres and my speed 200 knots,” he remembered. “I applied my air brake and

took the cover off my bombsight. I was diving at about a 50-degree angle. There were no aircraft carriers in the harbour, so I decided to attack a cruiser.” The cruiser is the USS *Raleigh* which, while damaged by the first wave of Japanese attackers, still has its 3,000 gallons of high-test gasoline intact.

09:09

Abe launches his attack on the *Raleigh*. “I released my bomb and at the same time pulled back on the stick. I almost blacked out for a moment, but I pulled out at 50 metres,” he said. On board the *Raleigh*, Captain Robert Bentham Simons watches as the bomb “missed our aviation gasoline tanks... by about 10 feet”.

09:15–09:30

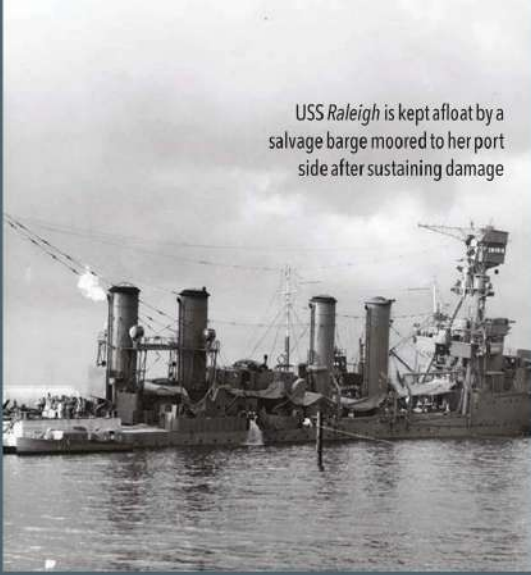
Rasmussen and three other US pilots engage enemy fighters over Kaneohe Bay at 9,000 feet – one of whom is Fujita.

“A P-36 [Rasmussen’s] started attacking my plane,” he said. “It was so close I couldn’t get away.” Both aircraft are hit and Fujita orders his men to break off the attack and head back to the task force. Meanwhile Rasmussen is assessing the damage to his plane. “I ducked into the nearest cloud cover, struggling to stabilise the plane. After getting the plane under control, I gingerly reached to the top of my head to see how badly I was injured. I was not wearing a helmet, only earphones. To my relief, I found only shredded plexiglass from the canopy mixed in my hair. There were 500 bullet holes in my plane.”

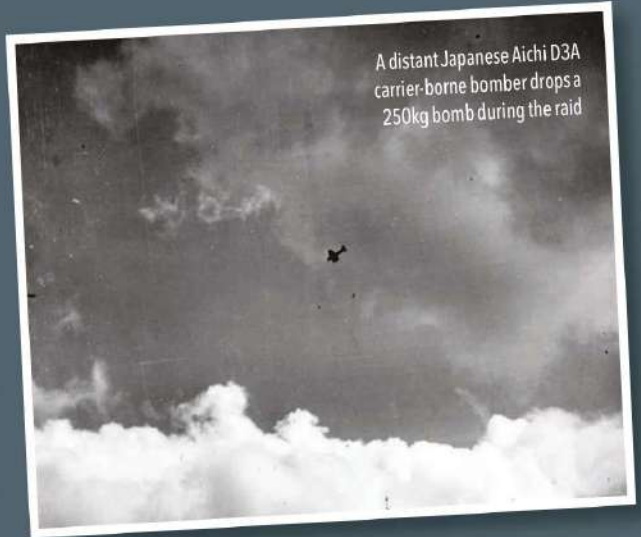
09:20

USS *Honolulu*, flagship of Kimmel’s cruiser force, is attacked and badly damaged by a bomb that penetrates the dock and explodes underwater, causing “considerable flooding” to the vessel.

USS Raleigh is kept afloat by a salvage barge moored to her port side after sustaining damage



A distant Japanese Aichi D3A carrier-borne bomber drops a 250kg bomb during the raid



"I ran down to the hangar line and it was chaos. Ammo exploding in the hangars, fires everywhere"

HALF MAST

The wreck of the USS Arizona. In all, 1,177 died on board. "The deck was riddled with bullet holes," recalled survivor Clyde Combs

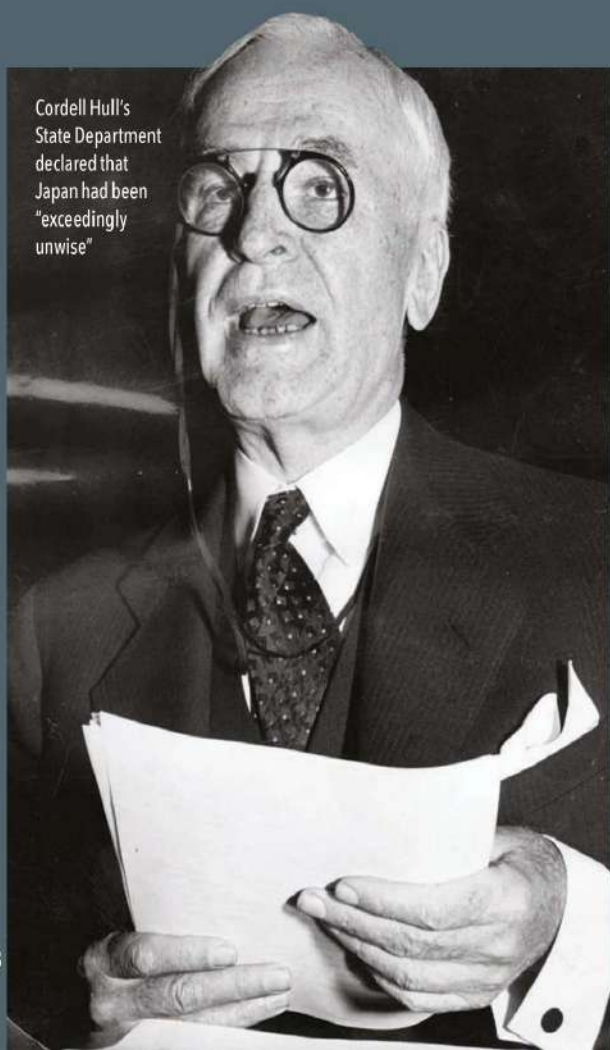
COURTESY OF THE NHHC-NARA-80-G-32448 & 80-G-32460/GETTY IMAGES





**CAUGHT IN
THE CROSSFIRE**

A victim of the Japanese bombing
in a car riddled with shrapnel holes,
eight miles from Pearl Harbor



Cordell Hull's
State Department
declared that
Japan had been
"exceedingly
unwise"

**"My friend's body
hung from the mast.
We removed our shoes
and jumped into the
burning water"**



An aerial view of Pearl Harbor on 10 December.
Oil streaks leak from damaged ships

GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY OF THE NHC-NARA-80-G-387565

09:30

Inside the *Arizona*, Clyde Combs and a handful of survivors have taken shelter in the gun room. With the water rising, they decide to go topside. "We stayed there until around 9.30am and finally went out on deck, and were shocked beyond belief at what had happened to our home," he recalled. "The deck was riddled with bullet holes, and body parts were scattered everywhere. The body of one of my friends was hanging from the mast. We couldn't do anything to help anyone so four or five of us removed some of our clothing and shoes and jumped overboard into the burning water." Combs is rescued but 1,177 of the *Arizona's* crew (which totals just over 1,500) are not.

09:31

Moored alongside the *Honolulu* is the USS *St Louis*, whose gunners claim to have shot down a Japanese aircraft after its attack on their neighbour. The *St Louis* is in Pearl Harbor for boiler-room repairs, but amid the attack the men of the ship's engine room carry out the modifications so that the cruiser can flee the inferno.

09:55

Lieutenant Saburo Shindo circles Pearl Harbor at 300 metres in order to assess the damage, as instructed by Commander Minoru Genda. His report is short and to the point: "Inflicted much damage."

10:00 onwards

Hundreds of badly wounded sailors are brought ashore, and among those helping tend them is 16-year-old Mary Ann, daughter of Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey, on Ford Island. "A young man, filthy black oil covering his burned, shredded flesh, walks in unaided," she remembered. "The skin hangs from his arms like scarlet ribbons as he staggers towards my mother for help. He gestures to his throat, trying to speak – he must have swallowed some of the burning oil."

10:04

As the *St Louis* clears the channel and heads into the open sea, two torpedoes are seen streaking towards her starboard bow. The crew braces for the impact,

but instead the torpedoes smash into the coral near the harbour entrance. A few moments later, a midget submarine surfaces and the guns of the *St Louis* target its conning tower.

10:10

Standing on the bridge of the *Akagi*, Admiral Nagumo watches as "black dots appear far to the south, one after another". They are the aircraft of the first wave, returning to the task force. Each pilot on landing reports to the air officer, Commander Shogo Masuda, who tabulates the results on a blackboard.

10:30

[16:00 *Washington time*] Cordell Hull is presiding over a conference of state when he learns of Japan's declaration of war on the US and Great Britain. The US State Department issues a statement that states that the Japanese "were exceedingly unwise in attacking Hawaii and thereby instantaneously and completely uniting the American people".

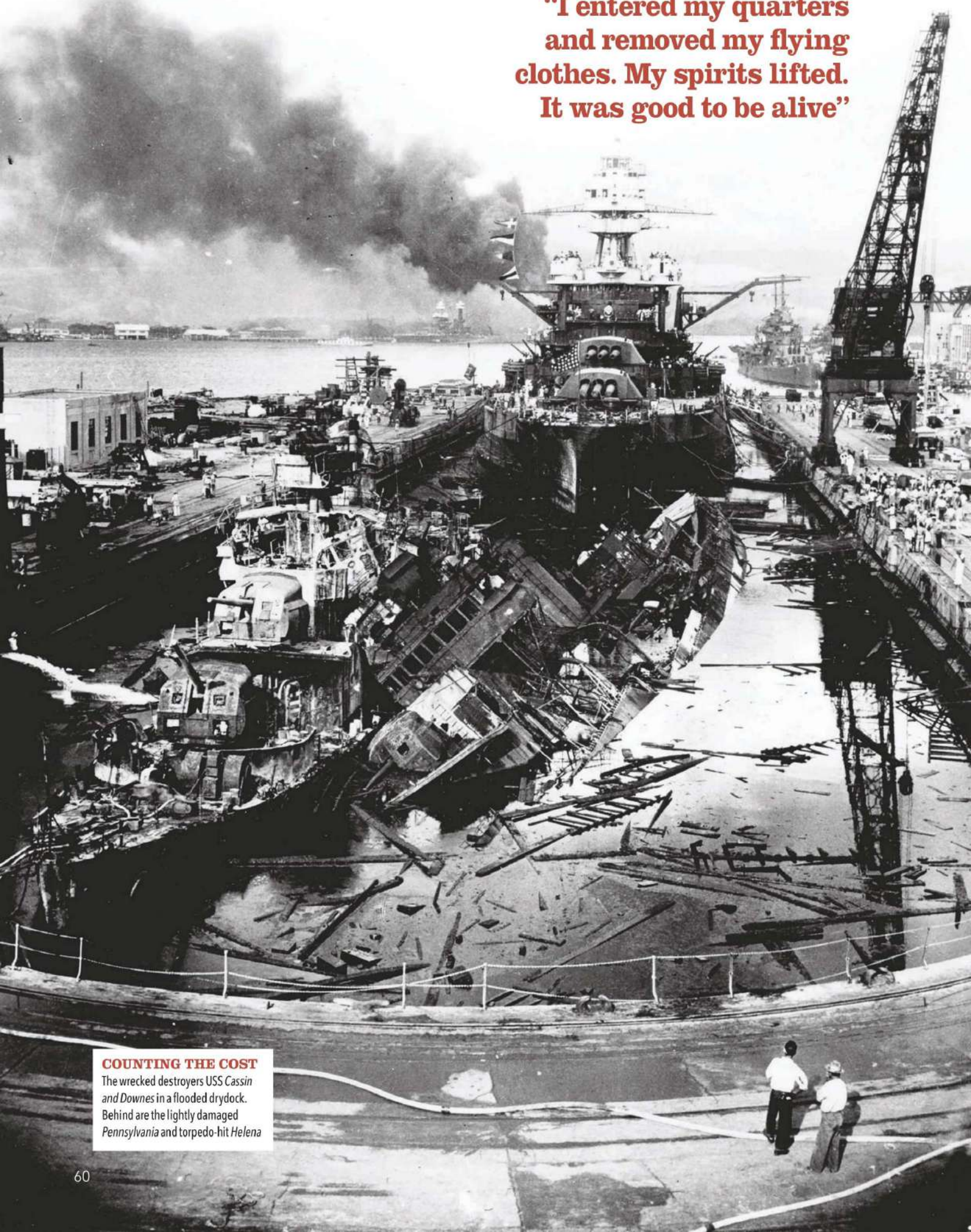
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FIRST BLOOD

A US sailor wounded in the attack is stretchered to safety on Kaneohe Bay. Many of those brought ashore were carrying horrific injuries

**“I entered my quarters
and removed my flying
clothes. My spirits lifted.
It was good to be alive”**



COUNTING THE COST

The wrecked destroyers *USS Cassin* and *Downes* in a flooded drydock. Behind are the lightly damaged *Pennsylvania* and torpedo-hit *Helena*



A cartoon found in a crashed Japanese plane after the attack. On the left it reads: "Wake up, you fools"

12:00

Fuchida, who stayed to observe the results of the second wave of attacks, lands on the *Akagi* with the rest of the second wave, one of whom is Zenji Abe. "I was still in a dazed and dreamy state when I returned to my quarters," he recalled. "I entered the tiny room and began to remove my flying clothes. In the centre of my otherwise clean desk lay the envelope containing my will, addressed to my father. Suddenly, my spirits lifted. It was good to be alive." Of the 353 aircraft that attack Pearl Harbor, only 29 fail to return, with one submarine and five midjets also destroyed.

12:30

Fuchida reports to Nagumo and his senior staff officers. When asked by the admiral if he thinks the US Pacific Fleet will be able to take to the sea within six months, he replies in the negative. Fuchida is asked what the next targets should be. He replies: "The dockyards, the fuel tanks, and an occasional ship." On the subject of launching another attack on Pearl Harbor, opinion is divided among the Japanese officers. Nagumo is concerned that the task force will be located and attacked by the Americans, and therefore he favours a withdrawal, but Commander Genda is more belligerent in calling for another strike at Pearl Harbor. "Let the enemy come!" he declares. "If he does, we will shoot his planes down."

13:00

Nagumo sends an estimate of the damage inflicted on the US Pacific Fleet to Yamamoto, then instructs the task force to turn "to the north at 26 knots".

FRONTLINE STORIES



Franklin D Roosevelt

The embattled president

Sunday 7 December served up a crisp winter's morning in Washington DC. After breakfast, President Franklin D Roosevelt met the Chinese ambassador, Dr Hu Shih, and expressed his belief that Japan would not risk a war with the United States. Lunch followed, with Roosevelt dining in his Yellow Oval Room study in the company of his close advisor, Harry Hopkins.

At 1.40pm, Roosevelt received a telephone call from Frank Knox, secretary of the navy, informing him of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The president summoned the rest of his advisors, as outside the White House a crowd of several hundred bewildered Americans gathered.

That evening, Roosevelt assembled his cabinet in the Yellow Oval Room. Several of those present were still ignorant about the precise details of the attack, so Roosevelt told them that "a great fleet of Japanese bombers bombed our ships in Pearl Harbor, and bombed all of our airfields... the casualties, I am sorry to say, are extremely heavy".

After the meeting, he hosted a gathering of politicians from the Senate and House of Representatives and explained the "awfully serious situation". His request to address a joint session of Congress at 12.30pm the next day was granted. The gathering lasted until nearly 11pm, and before going to bed Roosevelt again ran over his speech. Cordell Hull, the secretary of state, had advised him to lengthen the address, but FDR believed brevity would deepen its impact.

The seven-minute speech was broadcast live across the country on the radio, and its opening sentence has become one of the most famous lines in history. "Yesterday," declared FDR, "7 December 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the empire of Japan."

16:30

[22:00 Washington time]

FDR hosts a meeting of his cabinet to discuss the attack and informs them that 15 vessels (eight battleships, three light cruisers, three destroyers and a target ship) have been sunk, capsized or significantly damaged, while 188 aircraft have been destroyed and 2,403 people killed, with a further 1,178 wounded.



A Zero fighter from the aircraft carrier *Akagi*, which crashed near Fort Kamehameha at the entrance to Pearl Harbor

8 DECEMBER

07:00

The headline on the front page of *The New York Times* screams: "Japan wars on US and Britain: Makes sudden attack on Hawaii." The paper describes not only what has happened at Pearl Harbor, but also the fact that Japan has "now invaded Thailand and British Malaya and launched aerial attacks against Guam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Shanghai, Singapore and Wake Island".

12:30

Before a joint session of the US Congress, FDR describes the attack on Pearl Harbor as a "date which will live in infamy" and asks Congress to declare war on Japan. He ends his address with a vow: "With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God."

Jeannette Rankin is the only member of Congress to vote against declaring war on Japan, but three days later she raises no objection when FDR asks the House of Representatives to declare war on Germany in response to the Nazis' proclamation. A "rapid and united effort", he says, will secure victory for "the forces of justice and righteousness over the forces of savagery and barbarism". ●

"With the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the triumph – so help us God"

COURTESY OF THE NHP-C-NARA-80-G-13040/GETTY IMAGES

President Roosevelt asks Congress for a declaration of war against Japan on 8 December



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THE AFTERMATH

How the Pearl Harbor attack led to brutal reprisals for Japan, and changed the United States – and the world – for good

POLE POSITION

US marines raise the Stars and Stripes on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima. The attack on Pearl Harbor ushered in a bloody war in the Pacific



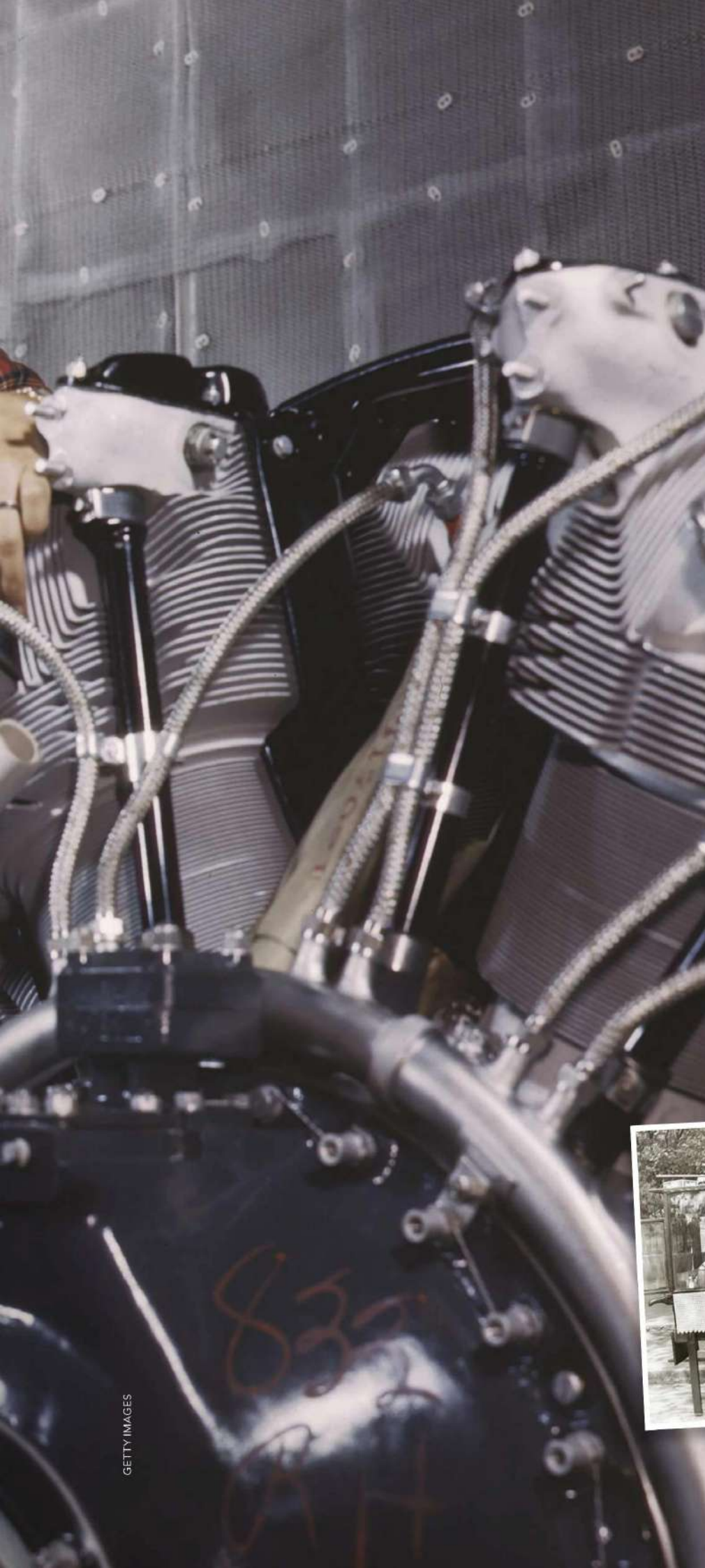
CHOCKS AWAY

Pearl Harbor sparked an aircraft-manufacturing drive – and, for the first time, allowed US women to perform jobs previously held only by men

FALLOUT from the ATTACK

How public fury at Japan's 'sneak' strike put an end to American isolationism and cranked the fearsome US war machine into action

BY GAVIN MORTIMER



GETTY IMAGES

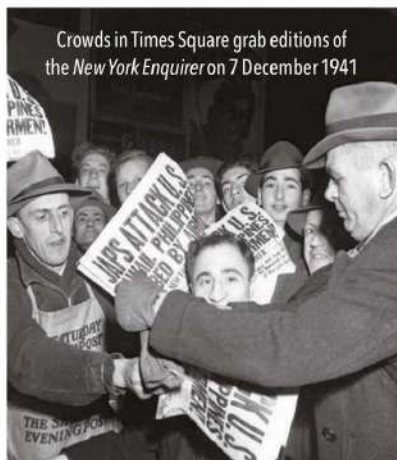
Stefanos Vasilakes was the embodiment of all that was great about the United States of America. After arriving from Greece in 1910, he had set up a hot peanuts and fresh popped corn cart on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and East Executive Avenue in Washington DC. The spot was actually White House property, but none of the occupiers minded when he sold the best peanuts in town. Presidents Taft, Wilson, Harding and Roosevelt had all been customers, as had Coolidge, who described Vasilakes as his “contact man” with the American public. To reporters, Vasilakes represented the “little man” of the nation.

And on the afternoon of Sunday 7 December the “little man” was livid. When the reporter from Washington’s *Evening Star* newspaper arrived outside the White House en route to a press conference, hastily called after news broke of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he found an agitated Vasilakes. “Steve was too excited to talk clearly,” wrote the reporter. “And about all he could say was: ‘Just three months, we finish them.’”



Stefanos Vasilakes, peanut seller to the presidents, with his cart in Washington DC





Crowds in Times Square grab editions of the *New York Enquirer* on 7 December 1941

The fury of Vasilakes and the rest of the US public at Japan's 'sneak attack' united the country in an instant. On the Sunday afternoon, President Roosevelt met first with his cabinet and then with a delegation from the House of Representatives and the Senate. The next day, Congress voted on whether to sanction FDR's wish to go to war with Japan, and only the pacifist Jeannette Rankin dissented. For that stance she was scorned by the American people, as were the few isolationists who continued to argue against involvement in armed conflict. One of the most vociferous of these prior to Pearl Harbor had been the celebrated aviator Charles Lindbergh, an ardent admirer of Nazi Germany and a man who used his fame to demand that Roosevelt keep the country out of a European war.

In May 1940, Lindbergh, a prominent figure in the isolationist America First Committee, had addressed the nation in a radio broadcast, ridiculing FDR's warnings that the US was in danger. The country was under threat from no one, said Lindbergh (pictured right in April 1941), unless "American peoples bring it on". He added: "There will be no invasion by foreign aircraft, and no foreign navy will dare to approach within bombing range of our coasts."

But Japan had dared, and with devastating consequences.

As one newspaper, the *Wilmington Morning Star*, put it in an editorial: "Japan's Sunday attack on



SHUTTING UP SHOP

Two members of the isolationist America First Committee close down the organisation's Chicago HQ after the Pearl Harbor attack

American outposts ended American isolationism. Leaders of that movement, with the exception of Charles Lindbergh, who has gone into seclusion, lost no time in making it clear that they underwent a change of heart forthwith."

AIDING THE ALLIES

This transformation was welcomed by Roosevelt, who from early in the war had recognised the danger posed by the ruthless ambition of Nazi

Germany. In September 1940, Adolf Hitler had signed a Tripartite Pact with Italy and Japan, and on 29 December that year – following his recent historic re-election to a third term of office –

Roosevelt addressed the nation in one

of his 'fireside chats' on the radio. "If Great Britain goes down, the Axis powers will control the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and the high seas," he warned. "It is no exaggeration to say that all of us, in all the Americas, would be living at the point of a gun."

Such rhetoric not only angered isolationists, it infuriated the Nazis. In September 1940, FDR had signed the Destroyers for Bases Agreement with Great Britain, transferring 50 destroyers to the Royal Navy in exchange for land rights on British possessions. In March 1941, he got his Lend-Lease bill through Congress in the face of fierce opposition from isolationists. Finally he was able to provide aid and military equipment to America's allies, principally Britain.

By the time the US declared war on Germany and Italy on 11 December 1941, responding to declarations from those nations, the Nazis were putting their own spin on events, with Reich radio accusing Roosevelt of "continually war-mongering"

Early in the war, FDR had recognised the danger posed by the ruthless ambition of Nazi Germany



HELPING HAND

Water-cooled machine guns just arrived from the US under the Lend-Lease policy are checked at an ordnance depot in England



A cartoon by Dr Seuss pokes fun at Charles Lindbergh's efforts to keep the US out of the war

since 1939. As a consequence, it said, the president "has at last got the war he has always been looking for".

The anger that surged across the United States on 7 December was visceral but controlled. The *Evening Star* reported that Major Edward Kelly, superintendent of the metropolitan police, was summoned to the White House because there was "fear of a popular demonstration" against some of the Axis embassies. Guards were posted, but no baying mob appeared in search of bloody vengeance.

The reporter from the *Star* was surprised. So he toured downtown Washington to gauge the mood, and in doing so encountered "something of the strange psychological phenomenon"



SQUARE MEAL

FDR's Lend-Lease bill also shipped food – such as the cheese in the sandwiches enjoyed by these children in England's Blitz-hit north





Mr and Mrs Barber's sailor sons pictured in their uniforms. All three died on the USS *Oklahoma*

that was so palpable in London during the Blitz of 1940. "Folks wanted to be together," he wrote. "Strangers spoke to strangers. A sense of comradeship of all the people was apparent."

This feeling strengthened in the days that followed the Pearl Harbor attack, as stories emerged of unimaginable grief and suffering. In Wisconsin, Mr and Mrs Barber learned of the deaths of three of their sons, all firemen aboard the USS *Oklahoma*. "I'm glad they died like men and could give their lives for their country," said their father, who just days before had received a photo of his sons aboard their ship. "When their [younger] brothers are old enough, I'm sure they will avenge their deaths."

If the people responded to the attack with a dignified restraint, the same could not be said of many media outlets. Sensationalism abounded in those first frenetic hours after the attack, with fake news spreading like wildfire. "Japanese parachute troops are reported in Honolulu," reported CBS. "At least five persons have been reported killed in the city of Honolulu. The Japanese dive bombers have been making continuous attacks, apparently from a Japanese aircraft carrier."

Some newspapers spewed hatred, like the fiery editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* on 8 December. "Japan has asked for it," stormed the paper. "Now she is going to get it. It was the act of a mad dog, a gangster's parody of every principle of international honour."

Other papers expressed dismay that



Sensationalism abounded in the hours after the attack, with fake news spreading like wildfire

the States had been suckered by the Japanese. "It now turns out that Japan was one of our customers who wasn't right," said the *Arkansas Gazette*, a reference to the raw materials that had been shipped to Japan and then returned in the form of bombs.

But a common thread in the analysis was relief that the divisive question of

whether the US should join the war had been settled. "The air is clearer," declared the *New York Herald Tribune*. "Americans can get down to their task with old controversies forgotten."

If Roosevelt was reassured with this unanimity, across the Atlantic in London, Winston Churchill was discreetly elated. He phoned FDR on Sunday evening to offer his sympathy and support. "We've got at least 2,000 men lost; we've lost three destroyers, four battleships," explained a dazed Roosevelt. "That's fine, Mr President; that's fine," replied Churchill, trying his best to soothe and reassure his friend and ally. The British prime minister had suffered similar agonies in his 18 months in the job, and while he was sincere in his grief for the president and his people, he knew what it meant for his beleaguered country now that the most powerful nation in the



BLAME GAME

A cafe in Boston, Massachusetts, slaps an impromptu notice in the window on 9 December 1941 as anti-Japan hysteria reaches its peak

THE INJUSTICE OF INTERNMENT

RIGHT: A 'Nisei' family at the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California

BELOW: Residents queue for food at a relocation centre



On 19 February 1942, President Roosevelt issued

Executive Order 9066, which permitted his secretary of war, Henry L Stimson, "to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he, or the appropriate military commander, may determine". In short, anyone considered an enemy alien could be rounded up and incarcerated in what were euphemistically called 'relocation centres', but in reality were internment camps. Particularly affected was the large Japanese-American community living on the Pacific coast: not only were an estimated 110,000 people interned, but the US Department of the Treasury froze the assets of all citizens and resident aliens who were born in Japan.

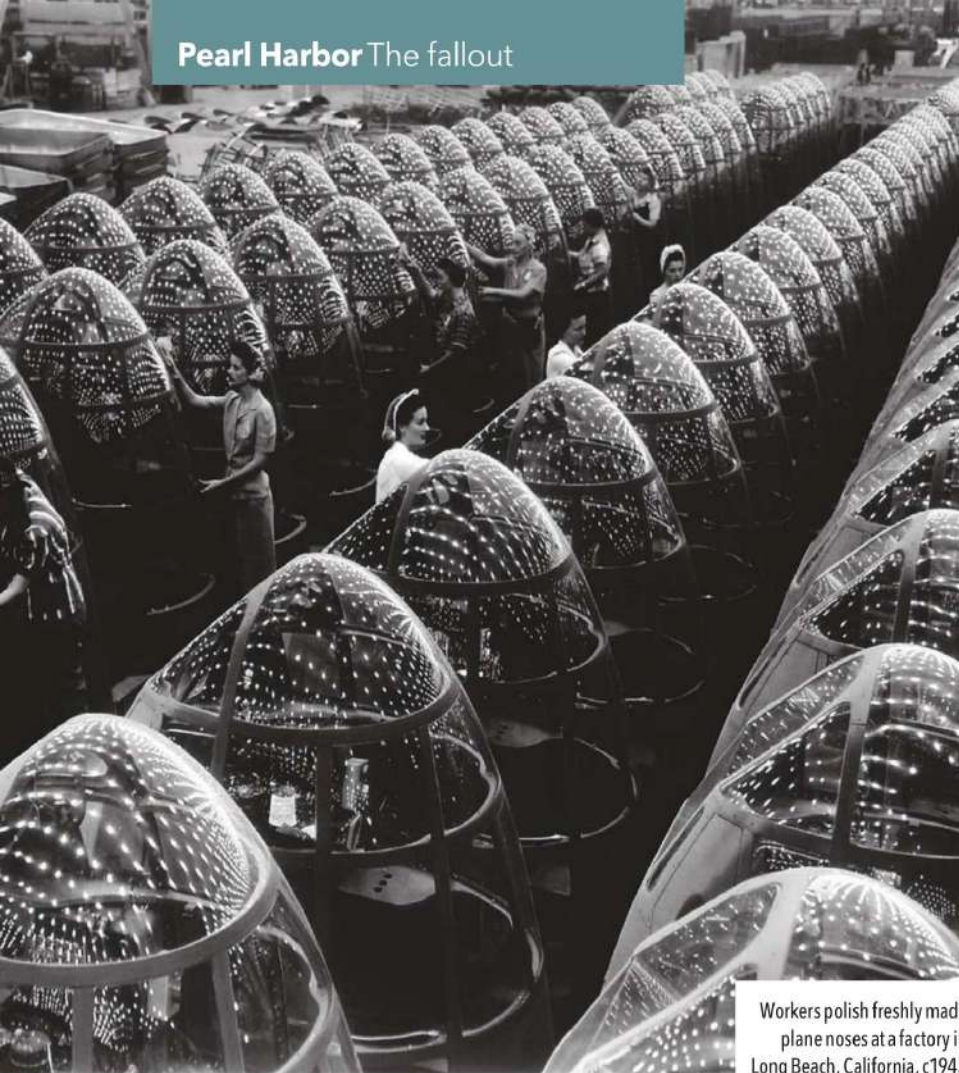
One of those detained was 28-year-old Roy Matsumoto – despite the fact he had been born and schooled in California. "It was very hard when I lost my freedom," he recalled. "I lost just about everything – almost all my personal property and financial assets. The government's excuse: it was enemy alien property. I was so mad."

Matsumoto was one of the 'lucky' internees – in that, as a fit young man, he was given the chance to join the military as a 'Nisei' (US-born children of Japanese immigrants) interpreter. He subsequently served with distinction in Burma with the special forces unit Merrill's Marauders, winning a Bronze Star for his courage. But most Japanese-Americans remained interned for the war's duration.

It wasn't until 1976 that President Gerald Ford officially rescinded Executive Order 9066, and in 1988 Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act, acknowledging that a "grave injustice" had been inflicted on Japanese-Americans during the war.



Bewildered citizens gather outside the White House in the hours after the Pearl Harbor attack



Workers polish freshly made plane noses at a factory in Long Beach, California, c1943

world had joined the fight. That evening, Churchill would later write, “being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful”.

Churchill’s immediate concern, however, was the news that, following Japan’s invasion of northern Malaya the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, Britain was now engaged in war with two formidable adversaries. In a statement to the House of Commons shortly after the attack, Churchill said: “When we think of the insane ambition and insatiable appetite which have caused this vast and melancholy extension of the war, we can only feel that Hitler’s madness has infected the Japanese mind and the root of the evil and its branch must be extirpated together.”

Describing the attack on Pearl Harbor as an act of “calculated and characteristic Japanese treachery”, the prime minister was at his bellicose best in issuing a solemn warning. “No one can doubt that every effort to bring about a peaceful solution had been made by the government of the United States and that immense patience and composure had been shown in the face of the growing Japanese menace. Now that the issue is joined in the most direct manner, it only

remains for the two great democracies to face their task with whatever strength God may give them.”

But what military strength did the United States have? Thanks to Roosevelt’s foresight, more than its enemies imagined. In September 1940, Washington had passed the Selective Training and Service Act – the first peacetime conscription in US history, whereby all men between the ages of 21 and 36 were compelled to register with local draft boards; if drafted, they served on active duty for 12 months. This was expanded

to 30 months in August 1941, and following the attack on Pearl Harbor, an amendment to the act made all men between the ages of 20 and 44 liable for military service. There had been much grumbling among draftees before Pearl Harbor, but not afterwards, as outraged young men flocked to the colours. By May 1945, America boasted nearly 8.3 million active-duty soldiers, whereas six years earlier its army of 187,893 soldiers had been smaller than Portugal’s.

FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

The US had the men to fight both the Japanese and the Germans, but did it have the machines and munitions? As Roosevelt told Congress a few weeks after the declaration of war, “Powerful enemies must be out-fought and out-produced.” It was a repeat of what he had told Americans in his fireside chat of 29 December 1940: that Britain was asking “for the implements of war, the planes, the tanks, the guns, the freighters which will enable them to fight for their liberty and for our security.... We must be the great arsenal of democracy.”

In May 1940, after Germany’s invasion of the Low Countries, the president had stated his wish “to see this nation geared up to the ability to turn out at least 50,000 planes a year”. Once war broke out, a revolution in the workplace was needed to achieve this. With young white men enlisting in their hundreds of thousands, their places on the production lines were taken by women and African-Americans – two demographics hitherto largely excluded from such employment. Both groups, especially the latter, encountered prejudice, so FDR passed



Eager volunteers crowd into an army recruitment centre in Chicago on 23 December 1941

GETTY IMAGES-POPPERFOTO

In 1939, the
US army was
smaller than
Portugal's; by
1945, it had 8.3
million soldiers

UP IN ARMS

Marine recruits perform calisthenics
with their rifles during basic training
in South Carolina, 1941. Pearl Harbor
caused young men to flock to sign up →



POWER TOOLS

FDR created the Fair Employment Practices Committee to ensure women and African-Americans were accepted into the workforce

Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in federal defence industries and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee.

By 1943, some 310,000 women were working in the US aircraft industry – around 65 per cent of the industry's total workforce, compared with just 1 per cent in the 1930s. For the majority, the work brought fulfilment and freedom. "My mother warned me when I took the job that I would never be the same," said Inez Sauer, a tool clerk at Boeing. "At that time, I didn't think it would change a thing. But she was right, it definitely did. At Boeing I found a freedom and an independence I had never known... The war changed my life completely. I guess you could say, at 31, I finally grew up."

As the workers gained in confidence, the American war machine expanded, thanks to their industry in meeting Roosevelt's demands. He wanted 60,000 aircraft in 1942 and 125,000 the year

after, and he nearly got them, with the production of 171,257 aircraft by early 1944. That year alone, the US produced more planes than the Japanese did in the entire war. As for ships, the industry underwent an astonishing transformation at the hands of Henry J Kaiser, who hired most of his workforce from the "destitute labourers of the Dust Bowl states". In 1941, it took 200 days to assemble one of Kaiser's Liberty ships, weighing between 9,000 and 10,500 tons; by November 1942 it took just five days, and by 1943 these supply vessels were entering service at the rate of 140 a month.

Roosevelt's "arsenal of democracy" cost money, of course, and to raise it, his government came up with several strategies, including the rationing of several important commodities, and the sale of war bonds to individuals and financial institutions. Selling the bonds relied on appealing to the nation's patriotism, as they yielded a 2.9 per cent annual return with a 10-year maturity.



Liberty ship SS Patrick Henry launches in 1941. By 1943, 140 were being made a month

GETTY IMAGES



Poster campaigns – like this one from c1943 – promoted the sale of war bonds to boost the wartime economy

Roosevelt braced himself for a long, bitter struggle, but he also yearned for a quick retaliatory strike

Advertising campaigns helped with this – posters were emblazoned with the words: “The greatest investment on earth: For your country, your family, yourself.”

But while Roosevelt braced himself for a long and bitter struggle, he also yearned for a quick retaliatory strike. Four days before Christmas, he summoned his military chiefs to the White House and demanded they come up with a way of hitting the Japanese in their own backyard. The result was the ‘Doolittle raid’ of April 1942, when 16 modified B-25 bombers, led by Lieutenant Colonel James H Doolittle, took off from the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* and flew 650 miles to strike targets on the Japanese mainland.

The material damage inflicted on Japan was slight, but the psychological hurt was immense. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the mastermind of the attack

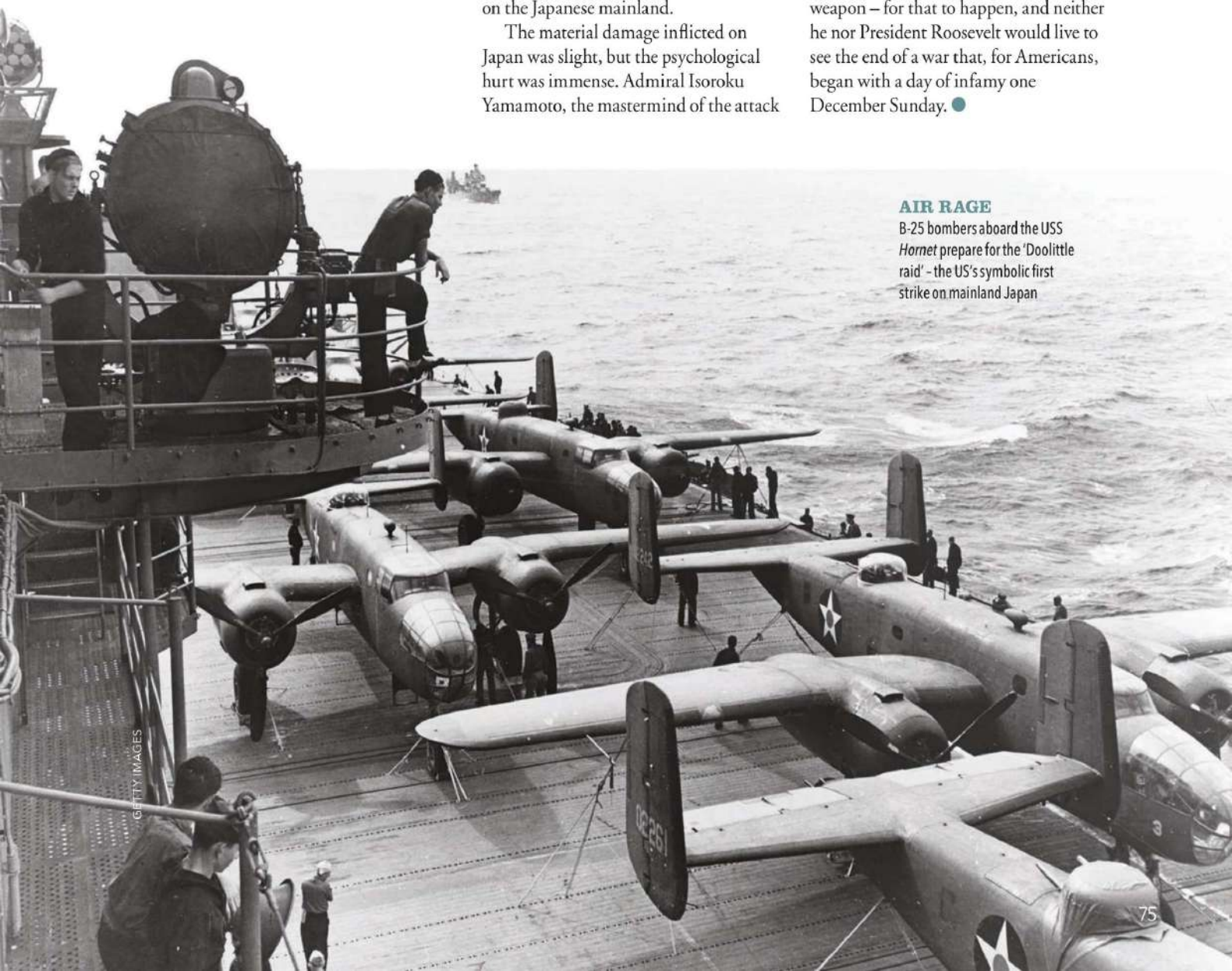
on Pearl Harbor, said it was “a disgrace that the skies over the imperial capital should have been defiled without a single enemy plane being shot down”.

Above all, the Doolittle mission was a huge fillip to Americans back home, one seized upon by the media. Describing the attack as a “daring raid”, Washington’s *Evening Star* showed no sympathy for Japan, which had, it said, “experienced for the first time in her history the destruction and terror of air assault which she has visited on scores of cities”.

Vasilakes, the presidential peanut vendor, had called on his compatriots to finish off Japan in three months. It would take four years – and an apocalyptic new weapon – for that to happen, and neither he nor President Roosevelt would live to see the end of a war that, for Americans, began with a day of infamy one December Sunday. ●

AIR RAGE

B-25 bombers aboard the USS *Hornet* prepare for the ‘Doolittle raid’ – the US’s symbolic first strike on mainland Japan







Caught off-guard

Why didn't Washington see the deadly strike on Pearl Harbor coming? The attack remained veiled in secrecy due to US hubris and inch-perfect Japanese planning

MIXED SIGNALS

A shortwave radio listening post in California, set up to report and translate broadcasts from Asia

BY ROBERT LYMAN

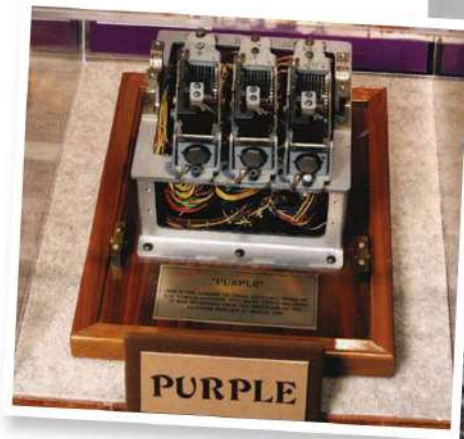


T

he US knew, in the second half of 1941, that Japan was preparing for war in the western Pacific and south-east

Asia. Tokyo needed to secure material for its military operations in China – principally oil, tin, bauxite and rubber. But Washington was never aware of the final details of these plans.

US strategists knew, of course, that a Japanese offensive would chiefly target Dutch and British possessions in south-east Asia, because it was there that the raw materials required to fuel Japan's imperial ambitions were located. They knew, also, that the US's military presence in the Philippines would at some point come into the crosshairs. For some time, it had been clear that Japan was war-minded. Emperor Hirohito's expansionist regime had been beating the war drum in Asia since it had entered Manchuria in 1931, and had begun military operations elsewhere in China in 1937. The world had seen the alacrity with which it had forced a humiliated France to submit to its demands in Indochina in June 1940, and had watched Japan sign the Tripartite Pact on 27 September 1940 with the European fascist aggressor nations, Germany and Italy.



US cryptographers had cracked the code for Japan's 'Purple' machine, used to send diplomatic messages

Above all, Washington knew about Japan's plans for possible war – especially if the United States or the European colonial powers refused to peacefully allow it the raw materials to carry on its war in China – because American cryptographers had broken the Japanese diplomatic cypher.

But the United States never had any inkling, at any point before about 7.50am on 7 December 1941, that Tokyo's plans for a general invasion of the region included a preventative and debilitating strike on the temporary home of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Subsequent attempts to suggest that Roosevelt – and by extension Churchill – knew of the impending attack and did nothing about it, in order to facilitate US entry into the war, haven't a shred of historical evidence, and serve merely to paper over the deficiencies in American military



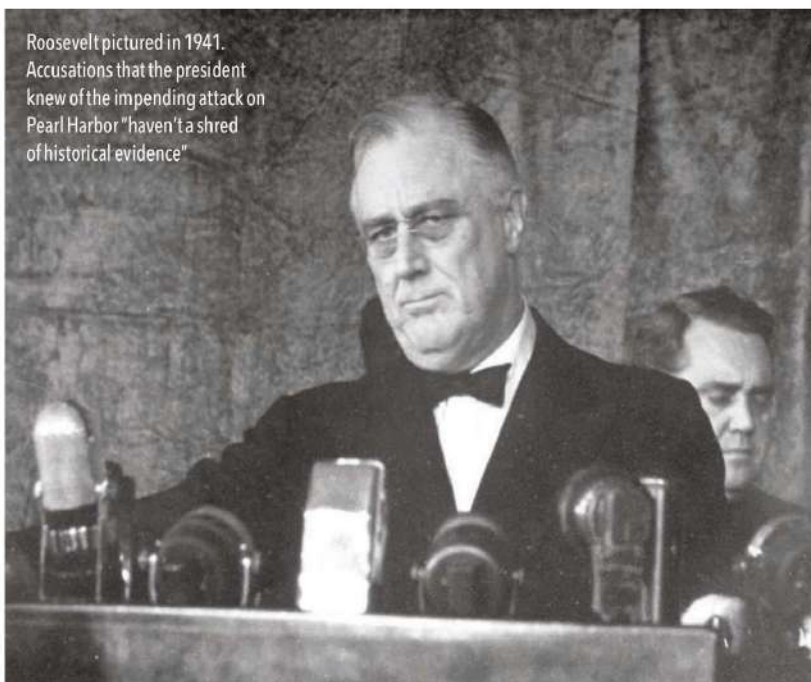
planning that enabled the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to be so effective.

This claim can be quickly dismissed. At the same time as the strike on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese launched a simultaneous attack on British Malaya – one that led to the fall of Singapore within 10 weeks. While Britain very much wanted the US in the war, this was to take on the Germans in Europe, not in the nightmare context of a fight on two fronts. The Japanese assault on western colonial interests in south-east Asia was equally if not more calamitous for Britain than the United States, and welcomed by no one in London or Washington. For Britain, the need to fight in two theatres of combat was as unpleasant a surprise as the debilitating blow to the fleet at Pearl Harbor had been to US war planners.

A TALE OF COMPLACENCY

The United States was aware of many elements of high-level Japanese political thinking as 1941 progressed, because it had managed to crack the country's main diplomatic code – known as the 'Purple cipher' – in an operation codenamed 'Magic'. The Japanese government and military used many different codes, but the Purple cipher

Roosevelt pictured in 1941. Accusations that the president knew of the impending attack on Pearl Harbor "haven't a shred of historical evidence"



COURTESY OF NATIONAL CRYPTOLOGIC MUSEUM, NSA/GETTY IMAGES



EMPIRE STRIKES

Japanese troops close in on Singapore in 1942. Their attack on British Malaya on 8 December 1941 was a nightmare scenario

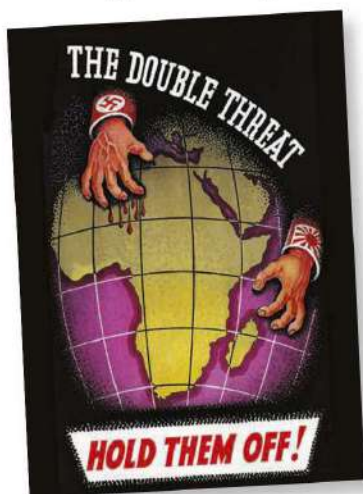
Japan's major triumph in the second half of 1941 was to keep the Pearl Harbor plan secret



Attaches of the Japanese consulate in New Orleans burn papers and records shortly after Pearl Harbor



British soldiers surrender to a Japanese patrol in Singapore on 15 February 1942



A poster warns of the "double threat" posed by Japan and Germany. The pair signed a pact in 1940

was the only one fully mastered by US cryptographers. The naval cipher, JN25b, had only been partially unravelled by the time Japanese aircraft were making their initial dive-bombing runs against the Pacific Fleet. Traffic between Tokyo and Japan's embassy in Washington, then, could be read by the Americans, though diplomatic messages never carried explicit details of military plans or activities, usually giving high-level instructions and 'lines-to-take' for diplomats. Specifics of military plans were never entrusted to the radio, with or without encryption.

All that Roosevelt and his secretary of state, Cordell Hull, knew of Japanese plans was what they could garner from the summary instructions General Hideki Tojo, the country's recently appointed prime minister, was sending to his ambassador in Washington. Tokyo had issued actual war orders on 5 November, and made a decision for war on 29 November, confirming it before the Emperor Hirohito on 1 December. These dates were known to Washington.

Orders went to the Japanese armed forces to expect war on 8 December (an attack on Oahu at 08:00 hours on 7 December would fall at 03:30 hours on 8 December in Tokyo). However, this date was not promulgated to Japan's embassy, so Washington was not aware.

Japan's major triumph in the second half of 1941 was to keep secret the plan to strike hard at Pearl Harbor, in the event that negotiations to secure its political ambitions in Asia were thwarted. The Japanese plan to emasculate US naval power in the Pacific, to allow it free rein in its seizure of the Philippines, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, included a range of measures that have been common to all successful surprise attacks in history. First, Japan carefully scouted the best route of attack: in this case, through the north Pacific, far from the normal shipping routes, which would enable the task force to avoid discovery by ships or aircraft as it circled towards Hawaii from the north. The route was reconnoitred by a civilian liner, which reported that it had sighted no other

RALLYING THE TROOPS

Filipino soldiers march back to barracks after a drill, 1941. The US suspected that the Philippines would come into Japan's crosshairs



ships on its journey. During the actual operation, the Japanese attack fleet used climatic subterfuge to assist them, advancing beneath a cover of cloud and rain. They were not spotted.

Secondly, the armed forces exercised an iron discipline in terms of radio and signal traffic, to prevent plans being inadvertently leaked or tracked by an eavesdropper, while radio traffic around the Japanese home islands was boosted to make up for the absence of radio traffic from the fleet now making its way across the Pacific. On top of this, Japanese carrier-borne air crews had practised relentlessly for months using mockups of the targets they expected to find anchored in Pearl Harbor, with pilots and crews of torpedo and dive bombers adding hundreds of hours to their flying logbooks for this single operation alone.

Technical details were examined and problems ironed out – such as the depth to which torpedoes sank when dropped from aircraft into the shallow waters of a harbour (solved by adding wooden fins to the torpedoes), and concerns over the accuracy of the explosives dropped by

Japanese air crews had practised for months using mockups of the targets they expected to find at the base

the dive bombers. Every aspect of the Japanese operation was planned to the tiniest detail, and rehearsed accordingly, all without the Americans having any notion of what was to come. The plan was revealed to Japan's Imperial Naval General Staff in August 1941 and confirmed – after much heated debate – on 3 November, only weeks before the attack was due to take place.

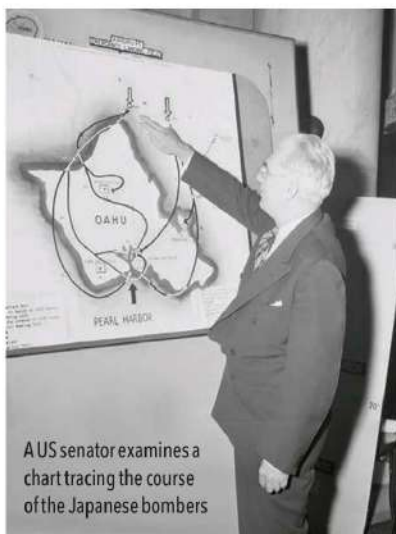
SUNDAY STAND-DOWN

The primary US failure was a cataclysmic underestimation of the enemy. It never entered American military consciousness that a massive ship-launched aerial bombardment could ever take place, at least without plenty of warning. And yet the Japanese attempted – and succeeded in achieving – the unthinkable. At the

time of the attack, many of the standard counter-measures available to US forces on Hawaii were either switched off or not working. A British-made radar set, which had proven its worth during the Battle of Britain the previous year, had been installed on Oahu to provide early warning of an air attack. It worked, brilliantly, but the news that massed aircraft were heading towards the islands from the north was dismissed by the duty officer at Pearl Harbor, who was expecting a group of B-17 Flying Fortresses to arrive from California that same morning.

No regular reconnaissance sweep took off from the islands to search for hostile maritime interest towards the north – US searches from Oahu were confined to the south-western sector – and nor was

GETTY IMAGES



A US senator examines a chart tracing the course of the Japanese bombers

there a permanent combat air patrol flying high above the islands to detect intruders. Why should there be? The idea that 350 torpedo bombers, dive bombers and escort fighters would emerge from thin air and descend on a place 3,400 miles from Japan was absurd. On the prize vessels of the Pacific Fleet, at weekend anchor on Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor, anti-aircraft ammunition was locked away. There was no one on anti-aircraft duty anyway, ships' crews having been stood down for the sabbath. On land, only a handful of the army's anti-aircraft guns had been supplied with ammunition, so slim were the chances of an air attack considered to be. Japanese

intelligence-gathering on the island, meanwhile, had been assiduous, and Tokyo knew the US ships always returned to Pearl Harbor for the weekend, with Sunday regularly rostered as a stand-down day. In previous weeks, dry-run invasion exercises had been conducted by navy vessels on a Sunday morning – but “by some stroke”, one general testified at a Congress hearing, “we did not go out on 7 December. The fleet was in the harbour.”

The simple truth was that no one, on the American side at least, had any clue that Pearl Harbor was about to be attacked. The possibility had apparently never been war-gamed in the context of the developing Japanese threat in the western Pacific. There was no conspiracy. In Washington, there was instead merely a profound lack of planning and a naivety about what Japan's military ambitions for its conquest of south-east Asia might entail. At the same time, on the Japanese side, a cunning and brilliantly executed military operation achieved precisely what its planners had intended: to prevent the US Pacific Fleet intervening in Tokyo's imperial expansion push far to the south-west. ●

GETTY IMAGES/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Admiral Yamamoto with his advisors aboard the *Nagato* in 1940. Every aspect of the operation was planned in minute detail

RADIO SILENCE

A Japanese signals unit in China, 1937. The ability to keep military communications secret was crucial to the attack on Pearl Harbor





Waking *the* giant

A black and white photograph showing US troops landing on a tropical island. In the foreground, a soldier in a helmet and combat uniform walks towards the camera. Behind him, other soldiers are visible, some carrying equipment. The background is filled with tall palm trees and dense tropical vegetation. The scene captures the initial landing phase of an island invasion.

ISLAND INVASION

US troops land on the Russell Islands in 1943. Japan's attempt to keep the US out of the Pacific theatre with a debilitating early strike on Pearl Harbor proved to be a misjudgment

Within four years of Pearl Harbor, Japan's empire lay in ruins. Why did it choose to provoke the world's most powerful nation? Plus, we chart how the Pacific War played out after the attack

BY ROBERT LYMAN

Visiting the memorial at Pearl Harbor today, gazing at the mangled wreckage of the USS *Arizona* with the crowds of tourists, one can be mistaken for concluding that the infamous raid on this military stronghold was an isolated act of Japanese deceit – the product of an anachronistic quasi-fascist regime long since consigned to history. It's hard to find at Oahu, in fact, any sense of the wider context of what Franklin D Roosevelt called a "date which will live in infamy". But an hour before the first Japanese planes appeared in the morning sky above the *Arizona*, amphibious forces under General Tomoyuki Yamashita had begun landing on the north-eastern coast of British Malaya, and several hours later were striking at US defences in the Philippines, Guam and Wake Island.

The truth is that the attack on Pearl Harbor was just one small piece in an integrated jigsaw of Japanese offensive operations in the western Pacific and the South China Sea – the first phase of a campaign designed to extend all the way to the coast of Australia, and create what

Tokyo euphemistically called the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'.

Washington had long known that war was probable, especially since it had broken the Japanese diplomatic codes. Indeed, the very presence of the Pacific Fleet in Hawaii – its home port was San Diego – reflected the US's concern about Japanese military aspirations in Asia following its years of intensive, oil-consuming offensives in China. For the United States, Pearl Harbor was the ideal forward base from which to deploy the fleet to counter any Japanese moves. The surprise of 7 December 1941 was not that Japan had attacked, but that it had managed to strike at the heart of Pearl Harbor, which American military complacency had assumed to be safe from Tokyo's machinations. Mixed in with the shock was a measure of US humiliation at being caught unawares, of making a number of small mistakes in the hours leading up to the raid, and of being on the receiving end of a demonstration of prowess by the armed forces of a nation the world had long underestimated.

But why war in 1941, and why the attack on Pearl Harbor? The

answer to the first question lies in Japan's manufactured sense of itself during the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War, and the vast and disorganised but potentially fruitful lands of post-imperial China. Japan had been engaged in an imperial adventure in Manchuria since 1931, and in China itself since 1937. Indeed, by 1941 the *idea* of China was existential to Japan: without China, Japan would not have an empire, and an empire was what Japan desperately wanted, to give full expression to its modernity.

The problem for Tokyo was that to fuel its expansion in China, and the war against the nationalist Kuomintang

As far as Tokyo was concerned, the US was preventing Japan achieving its national goals

TIMELINE **After Pearl Harbor**

How the Allies and Japan fought a bitter war to control the Pacific

December 1941

The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor and Malaya, invade Guam and land on Luzon in the Philippines. They attack Wake Island and begin an invasion of Thailand and Hong Kong. The **US and Britain declare war on Japan**. The British surrender in Hong Kong, followed by the fall of Singapore in February 1942.

Guadalcanal was the Allies' first major attack on the Japanese



August–December 1942

US marines begin an assault on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands – the first major offensive by Allied forces against Japan in the war. The Japanese defenders are overwhelmed by Allied invaders. The naval **battle of Guadalcanal begins** in mid-November, but Japan abandons its bid to retake Guadalcanal's airfield.

GETTY IMAGES

June 1942

The **battle of Midway** begins in the centre of the Pacific. US torpedo planes and dive bombers destroy three Japanese carriers and disable a fourth. **Victory for the US over Japan** in this major engagement will prove a turning point in the war. Meanwhile, after completing its conquest of the Philippines, Japan invades the Aleutian Islands in the territory of Alaska.

An artist's impression of the battle of Midway, as seen from the air



armies, required oil, rubber and steel, none of which it could provide itself. But neither were the European or US colonial powers in Asia prepared to sell their resources to Japan, because they knew what these riches would be used for: a creeping racial war in China of the sort that had already produced the Nanjing massacre and other Japanese atrocities.

MANIFEST DESTINY

The US, meanwhile, had grown used to viewing China through the lens of its own kind of imperial conquest: the work of Christian missionaries. A romantic contrast between psalm-singing Chinese children and bayonet-wielding Japanese soldiers was firmly fixed in the American popular mind. In fact, a US-funded route to help feed China's Kuomintang under their patriot leader, Chiang Kai-shek, ran from Rangoon through Burma to Yunnan – evidence, as far as Tokyo was concerned, that the United States was deliberately trying to prevent Japan achieving its legitimate national goals.

But empire, to the minds of the existing imperial powers, was one thing;

FUEL FEUD

The oil fields of Yenangyaung, Burma. Japan's success in the war was reliant on access to oil and other resources elsewhere in Asia



acquiring it through systematic torture and murder was another. Consequently the United States, the Netherlands and Great Britain increasingly refused, by means of sanctions and embargoes, to allow Japan free access to resources if the Chinese component of Japanese self-expression was to continue.

War became inevitable by 1941 because Japan could not let China go. Since 1931, China had become part and parcel of Japan's conception of itself as *the* pre-eminent Asian empire. It became impossible to relinquish this idea, as doing so would entail unacceptable emasculation. It wasn't just the hawks

BRIDGEMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK-AP/ALAMY



An Allied fighter attacks a Japanese convoy ship in the Bismarck Sea

March 1943

The Allies emerge victorious in the **battle of the Bismarck Sea**, in which US and Australian aircraft attack a Japanese convoy taking troops to New Guinea to reinforce the south-west Pacific. The Allied assault sinks four of eight destroyers and all eight troop transports, with the loss of some 3,000 Japanese soldiers. No further attempts are made to reinforce New Guinea.

February 1943

After five months of bloody fighting, Emperor Hirohito allows **Japanese troops to withdraw from Guadalcanal**. The campaign marks a strategic transition for the Allies, from defensive to the aggressive operations that will ultimately lead to defeat for Japan.



AHS Centaur, sunk in May 1943

May 1943

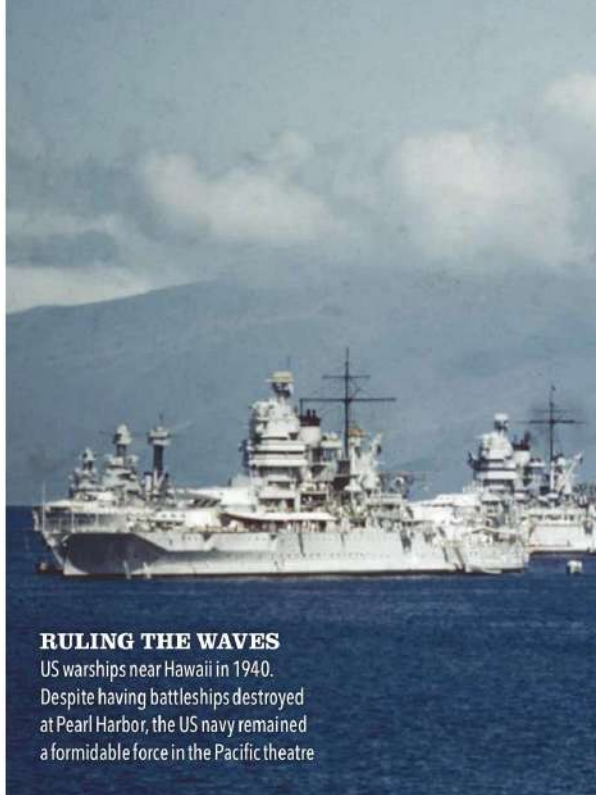
US forces begin the recapture of the Aleutian Islands, ultimately forcing Japan's withdrawal. A **Japanese submarine sinks an Australian hospital ship**, the AHS Centaur, with the loss of 268 lives. The incident generates international outrage, since attacking hospital vessels is considered a war crime under the 1907 Hague Convention.

who felt this way, but most people across the spectrum of political opinion. Japan's hubristic self-conception as a great nation with a manifest destiny, of which ownership of China constituted an essential part, meant that by the end of 1941 it was caught in a trap of its own making: it could let go of China, or it could go to war to source the war-making materials (such as oil) that it needed to preserve its hold on the country – even if this meant taking on the United States.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was not therefore an isolated military operation, nor a petulant swipe from an out-of-control Japanese military at a recalcitrant

US. It was a critical component of a much larger plan, at the heart of which was the capture of mainly European colonial possessions in south-east Asia, for the express purpose of fuelling its expansionist ambitions in China. Tokyo had judged that the German and Italian war in Europe and north Africa had weakened the British, French and Dutch to such an extent that their Asian colonial possessions would be ripe for the taking, and that these would provide the natural resources the country needed to pursue its China policy. Pearl Harbor came about because Japan needed to protect the seaward flank of its invasion of south-east Asia from interference by the United States' Pacific Fleet, based in Hawaii. If the US fleet wasn't checked in this way, Japan feared it could set sail and disrupt the plan to seize, by sudden and decisive manoeuvre, colonial possessions in the southern region. Its military planners had two choices: allow the US Pacific Fleet to sally out in response to the Japanese invasion of south-east Asia, and engage it in open battle on the high seas – or prevent it sailing at all. The latter alternative seemed far preferable.

Pearl Harbor was not an isolated military operation but a critical component of a much larger plan



RULING THE WAVES

US warships near Hawaii in 1940. Despite having battleships destroyed at Pearl Harbor, the US navy remained a formidable force in the Pacific theatre

Japan's ambition, then, was not to go to war merely to restrict Washington's military options at a time when Japan was attempting to maximise hers. The question was how to prevent American interference. The position Tokyo arrived at after many months of deliberation was that it was necessary to obliterate the US's forward naval presence in Hawaii, and thus force the Pacific Fleet back to

November 1943

US troops land on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. In the **battle of Empress Augusta Bay**, US warships turn back Japanese attacks intended to prevent Allied landings. Washington commences air raids on the key Japanese regional base of Rabaul (in what is today Papua New Guinea), and US troops land on the Pacific islands of Tarawa and Makin.



This information poster depicts Australian (red) and US (brown) advances in New Guinea

January 1944

US troops land on Saidor, New Guinea. The **British recapture Maungdaw on the western coast of Burma**, while the Chinese see successes in Burma's north. The US begins an invasion of Marshall Islands.

GETTY IMAGES/IWM (ART.IWM.PST.16568)

AUS air force plane attacks Japanese positions near Cape Gloucester



December 1943

US soldiers land on the Arawe peninsula (now in Papua New Guinea), drawing troops away from Cape Gloucester, where later in the month marines conduct a full-scale assault as **the Allies move closer to strategic bases** for attacks on the Japanese garrison at Rabaul.



California, and a position where it could not involve itself in Japanese affairs for perhaps a year or more. The future, Tokyo hoped, would take care of itself.

Perhaps the fleet's destruction would persuade the US to concentrate its military efforts in the Atlantic, and not to bother itself with the Pacific at all. The worst case was that the United States would declare war – but, set on the

political course it had determined for itself, Japan had no choice but to do something to prevent the Pacific Fleet putting out to sea. If the strike was comprehensive, Washington might not be able to follow up its declaration with the ability to fight.

An alternative plan might have been to ambush the US fleet by means of submarines and mines as it left the

shallow waters of Oahu. Then again, Japanese planners thought, a robust and bloody first strike might persuade an inherently isolationist United States not to engage in war at all, especially when ships and military effort were at that very moment being concentrated on the Atlantic and the threat to American interests there from German U-boats.

GRAVE MISCALCULATION

Could Japan have done things differently, and thus avoided – as Combined Fleet commander Admiral Yamamoto feared it might – waking the sleeping giant? On the one hand, allowing the Pacific Fleet to sail to counter Japanese action in south-east Asia would have resulted in a massive and probably decisive naval battle somewhere between the Marianas and the Marshall Islands. This, in fact, was what both Japanese and US naval planners had been preparing for in war-gaming sessions for years. The imperial Japanese navy could have been victorious in such a confrontation, but this was in no way guaranteed against the powerful Pacific Fleet, with its nine massive battleships and three aircraft carriers. Far better,

A Japanese bomb explodes alongside the USS *Bunker Hill* during the battle of the Philippine Sea



COURTESY OF THE NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND-NH 74281/ALAMY

June 1944

US and Chinese forces besiege the Japanese at Myitkyina, Burma. In India, a British counter-offensive begins, supported by US air forces. **The US launches the first B-29 raid on mainland Japan.** The battle of the Philippine Sea – the largest carrier-to-carrier naval battle in history, nicknamed the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' by victorious US pilots – crushes Japan's carrier capacity.

March-April 1944

The Japanese invade India, and renew their offensive in China. Allied forces land at Hollandia, New Guinea, destroying nearly 100 planes in surprise attacks on Japanese airfields. The Japanese withdraw from all strategic positions on east of the island. Chinese and US troops begin an assault on Myitkyina in Burma.



A US military propaganda poster incites anti-Japanese sentiment

August 1944

Japanese resistance ends on Tinian in the Marianas. Myitkyina falls to Allied forces. **The Japanese take Hengyang, China, but are pushed out of India.** After several weeks of heavy fighting on Guam, Japanese troops are defeated by US units, having occupied the island since 1941. The US also retakes Biak, New Guinea, as Japanese forces fight to the death.

Tokyo thought, to prevent the US sailing at all, in a strategy that could be described as 'in for a penny, in for a pound'.

In a sense, therefore, the attack on Pearl Harbor can be seen as an attempt by Japan to *prevent* war with America, not provoke it. But this entailed a crazy risk. Did Japan really believe it could intimidate the Americans out of the war with a show of force, or was Tokyo in the last chance saloon, with no choice but to attack and hope for the best?

Even without the benefit of hindsight, the Japanese calculations were naive. The decision was one that only a state which had drunk deeply of its own hubris could have made. In the first place, it misjudged the intensity of the anger that Americans would feel for the deaths of thousands of their innocent boys, killed as the result of Japanese duplicity. Secondly, it did not properly comprehend the role China played in the US mind, of a country bravely trying to resist Japanese takeover. Thirdly, by taking on the United States, Japan was inciting a country with a war potential that far outstripped its own. If the gamble didn't work, and the US retaliated, economic

OVERWHELMED
When Allied troops landed on the Indonesian island of Morotai, they outnumbered Japanese forces 100 to one



and military laws dictated that Japan – while it might win some short-term, temporary and tactical successes – would nevertheless lose the war.

Lastly, Japan had misunderstood the sea-change in American isolationism that had taken place since 1939. The US never sought war, but where it arrived

on its own shores, the policy of non-interventionism would quickly disappear, to be replaced by a desire for righteous retribution. The fury that 7 December 1941 evoked across the United States demonstrated just how massively had Japan miscalculated American ambition, intention and resolve, and just how blind

September 1944

US landings at Peleliu, Palau Islands, commence what marines will call the '**bitterest battle of the war**' – a grinding two-month tussle that sees 10,000 killed on each side. Allies launch the battle of Morotai, with a landing force that outnumbers the island's Japanese defenders 100-1. A British offensive begins against the Japanese in Burma's coastal province of Arakan.

US marines show off Japanese flags captured during the battle of Iwo Jima

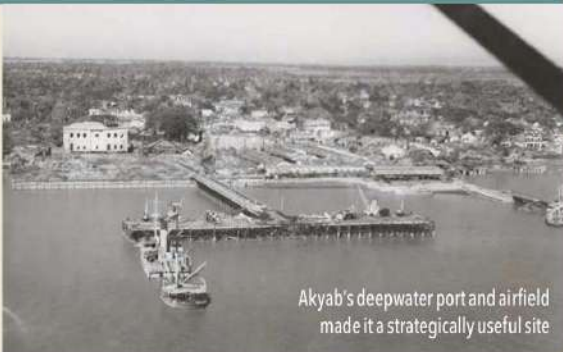


February 1945

Resistance to Japan begins in Indochina. Japanese troops capture Nanyung, China. US units attack Japanese forces in Manila, and Allied troops recapture the island of Corregidor, at the entrance to Manila Bay.

US forces land on Iwo Jima, 750 miles south of Tokyo.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL-017611 & SUK13688/GETTY IMAGES



Akyab's deepwater port and airfield made it a strategically useful site

January 1945

British forces take Akyab on Burma's Arakan coast. US troops land on the Lingayen Gulf, Luzon. **Japan's blockade of China is broken.**

The Burma Road reopens, linking Burma with south-west China and re-establishing a key supply route. US carrier-based planes commence raids on Japanese Indochina.

its own military and political planning had become to the failures inherent in its own expansionist ideas.

A DEVASTATING REVENGE

It was just about possible that an attack on Pearl Harbor could have prevented immediate American retaliation and ensured Japanese freedom in the western Pacific, at least for a time. But Japanese commanders did not press the attack as hard as they should have, and so missed an opportunity to push the strength of the US all the way back to California. For all its noise and drama, the attack on Pearl Harbor was a strategic failure of cataclysmic proportions, because it pulled America violently into a war it didn't want – a war that Japan also didn't need to have. If it had destroyed the American capacity to continue to fight by pursuing Hawaiian infrastructure, oil tanks and aircraft carriers out at sea, it is possible that, forced to launch operations from its west coast, the United States would have ceded the Pacific to Japan for a time, perhaps until Germany had been defeated in the west. On 7 December 1941, this opportunity was available to the Japanese

For all its drama, the Pearl Harbor attack was a strategic failure of cataclysmic proportions

strike force, but its commander fluffed his lines, and the opportunity was lost for ever. In this failure to press home its advantage lay the seeds of the eventual Japanese defeat.

In sowing the wind, it reaped the whirlwind. That fateful morning in December 1941 was the moment when the Second World War became a global conflagration. What few in Tokyo recognised, in their haste to achieve their short-term imperialist goals, was that if Washington responded aggressively, the result would be disastrous for Japan. The US's conventional military potential, even without considering the advent of nuclear weapons in August 1945, was

considerably greater than Japan's. In addition, the idea that the United States might somehow lack the political will to respond if its Pacific Fleet were knocked out, perhaps because it had its hands full with fighting Germany, was wishful thinking of the highest order. Roosevelt needed to expend no additional political capital to persuade his compatriots that they should declare war on Japan. Within six months, the US defeat of the Japanese fleet at Midway began the process of destruction that Pearl Harbor had unleashed, which reached its inevitable, devastating denouement at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. ●



A huge smoke cloud fills the sky following the attack on Hiroshima

An estimated half a million people watched FDR's funeral procession in Washington, April 1945



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April 1945

US troops land on Okinawa, a Japanese prefecture of 150 islands in the East China Sea. The Japanese begin an offensive on the US airbase at Chihchiang, China. US aircraft sink the Japanese super-battleship *Yamato*, at the time the most heavily armed in existence. Back in the US, **President Roosevelt dies**, and is succeeded by Harry S Truman.

March 1945

US and Filipino troops retake Manila, while British and Indian troops capture Meiktila and Mandalay in Burma. **A massive incendiary raid annihilates 16 square miles of Tokyo** in the deadliest conventional bombing in history. After five weeks, fighting ends on Iwo Jima with a US victory, providing a key base for attacks on the Japanese mainland.



August–September 1945

The US drops the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Stalin's Soviet Union declares war on Japan and invades Manchuria, defeating the Kwantung army, Japan's largest fighting force. A **second atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki, and Japan surrenders** on 15 August, signing the documents in a formal ceremony on 2 September. Ten days later, **Lord Mountbatten** (left) accepts the surrender of the Japanese southern armies in south-east Asia. ●



The attack's lasting legacy

In 1940, the US was an inward-looking nation with a modest army. In recent times it has been the 'global policeman', with troops in all corners of the world. Could this transition from isolationism to internationalism have happened without Pearl Harbor?

BY NIGEL JONES

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TOUR DE FORCE

A US unit takes up positions south of Baghdad, Iraq, in 2007. Since the Second World War, the US has been involved in numerous foreign campaigns



The 9/11 attacks on New York marked the first time US soil was hit from the air after Pearl Harbor

On 11 September 2001, two hijacked airliners were deliberately flown into New York's World Trade Center, bringing down the twin towers, while a third plane hit the Washington Pentagon, and a fourth crashed after passengers stormed the cockpit.

The nearly 3,000 killed on 9/11 was close to the number of dead – 2,400 – on another “date which will live in infamy”, in President Roosevelt’s famous phrase. The last time American soil had been attacked from the air was 7 December 1941, when the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service mounted a surprise – and spectacularly successful – raid on the US navy’s main Pacific base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

Although Hawaii, an island group in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, is many hundreds of miles from the US mainland – indeed, is closer to Japan – the shock of the attack for the average American citizen was profound. Most had become used to thinking that their vast country, protected on its eastern and western coasts by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, was immune to foreign attack.

This feeling of invulnerability was not based in historical reality. In the past, the US had fought wars with the country to its immediate south, Mexico, seizing vast swathes of territory in what





STRIKING DISTANCE

US soldiers march towards the Rhine, c1918. Americans were used to fighting foreign nations overseas – not on their own shores

would become the states of Arizona, Texas, New Mexico and California. It had even clashed with its generally friendly northern neighbour, Canada.

Nevertheless, Americans had got used to the idea that wars with foreign countries were fought overseas – for instance, the Spanish-American War in the Caribbean in 1898, or the Philippine-American War soon afterwards, or the US's entry into the First World War in 1917. These experiences had fuelled a powerful isolationist lobby group in Washington when the Second World War broke out in 1939. So when the fleets of Japanese bombers came screaming out of a clear sky on that December day in 1941, the surprise, horror and outrage among ordinary Americans ran very deep indeed.

In the immediate aftermath, these feelings translated into a grim determination to exact revenge and crush what was seen as a cruel and treacherous foe. President Roosevelt received near-unanimous support when he asked Congress for special powers to wage war.

The stage was set for America's huge industrial and manpower resources to

The horror and outrage turned into a grim determination to crush a cruel and treacherous foe

be brought to bear in a gruelling conflict waged across the world by land, sea and air. As the new global superpower, the US was strong enough not only to take on Japan in a campaign ranging across the whole Pacific, but to join Britain and her allies in bombing and liberating north Africa, and eventually western Europe, from their fascist and Nazi occupiers.

INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION

American industry immediately went over to a war footing. Production of every kind of war material, from B-24 Liberators and Flying Fortress bombers to Sherman tanks, jeeps and munitions,



A 1942 poster featuring 'Rosie the Riveter', a symbol of women joining the war effort



A US bomber refuels in Tunisia, 1942. US forces joined the Allies in north Africa

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increased tenfold and goods rolled off the conveyor belts in a seemingly endless stream. A vast government propaganda programme – symbolised by the famous poster of ‘Rosie the Riveter’, a muscular female munitions worker in a red bandana – encouraged women to leave hearth and home for the war factories.

Women who had previously been trapped in ‘pink-collar’ jobs – such as secretarial and domestic work – took the chance to try out higher status, better-paying roles. They worked in sawmills, drove taxis, loaded freight and operated heavy machinery. They were employed as builders and mechanics. The greater economic freedom and responsibility they tasted was transformative, furthering the cause of gender equality in the US. The ripples of that moment can still be felt today.

The contribution of women to the war effort released millions of men for the armed forces, which were transformed from a modest organisation intended for home defence to the world’s biggest military machine. As a consequence of Pearl Harbor, the last traces of the Great

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FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Everything from Sherman tanks to B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, pictured, rolled off US production lines in the attack’s aftermath



Tora! Tora! Tora!, 1970



From Here to Eternity, 1953



Pearl Harbor, 2001

PEARL HARBOR ON SCREEN

Though Pearl Harbor was a stunning defeat for the US, it has not lacked for portrayals on the silver screen. First off the runway was *December 7th*, directed by the Hollywood legend John Ford. Made in 1943, within two years of the raid, the full version of the movie went unseen for decades, censored because of the difficult questions it asked about Pearl Harbor’s defences and the treatment of Japanese-Americans in Hawaii after the attack.

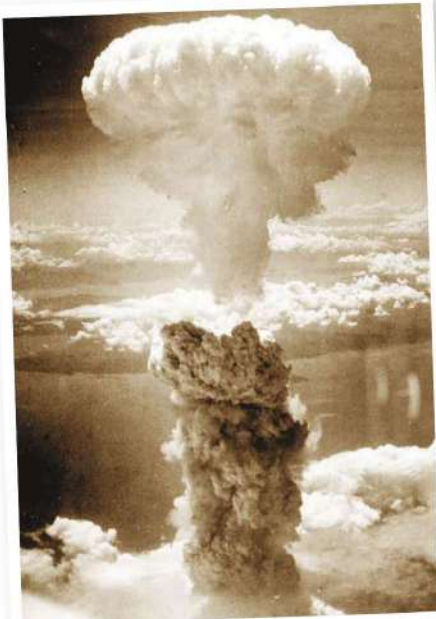
A decade on, in 1953, came Fred Zinnemann’s *From Here to Eternity*, a romantic drama based on the bestseller by James Jones, a former soldier who witnessed the attack. Set on Hawaii in the build-up to the raid, the film is best known for one of the steamiest shots in movie history, with Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr kissing on the sand as the tides roll around them. Also starring Frank Sinatra and Montgomery Clift, the film includes the

raid more as an afterthought, with the action taking place between the lovers and personnel stationed at the base.

Probably the definitive treatment of the Pearl Harbor story came in 1970, with the release of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* – a joint Japanese-American effort that gave Hirohito’s forces almost equal billing to their US targets. This is the most comprehensive and serious account of the raid on film.

The most recent full-scale feature, 2001’s *Pearl Harbor*, is – like *From Here to Eternity* – more concerned with the romantic lives of its characters than the raid itself. It boasts a star-studded cast, including Ben Affleck, Josh Hartnett, Jon Voight and Alec Baldwin. Though it scored a massive commercial hit, it sank with the critics. Joe Morgenstern of the *Wall Street Journal* offered up a typical assessment when he called it a “blockheaded, hollow-hearted industrial enterprise”.





The mushroom cloud over Nagasaki, August 1945

In waking the sleeping giant, Japanese militarists lit the fuse for a truly terrible revenge

campaign to roll back the enemy that would finally see them wrest islands like the Philippines from Japanese occupation. The navy soon began to recover from the blow Pearl Harbor had inflicted. A few short months after the raid, a squadron of B-25 bombers took off from the USS *Hornet* and dropped their lethal payloads on Tokyo.

But Pearl Harbor was such a blow to American pride that it – like 9/11 – has spawned a host of dark conspiracy theories. The most popular is that the Roosevelt administration had advance warning of the attack but chose to do nothing, as it needed a convincing *casus belli* to unite sceptical Americans in their support for war in the Pacific. The consensus among historians, however, is cock-up rather than conspiracy: the US, somewhat complacently, did not anticipate being attacked by what was widely seen as an ‘inferior’ nation.

In waking the sleeping giant, Japanese militarists lit the fuse for a truly terrible revenge, culminating in the US dropping

the world’s first atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrendered shortly afterwards, ending the Second World War, which had concluded victoriously for the Allies in Europe four months before.

THE AGE OF US SUPREMACY

Today, the memory of Pearl Harbor may be fading, as the last veterans of the “date which will live in infamy” pass away and the Second World War moves from recollection into history. Last year, only around 100 aged veterans were able to attend the annual commemoration service held at the scene of the attack. Nevertheless, the wounds that the strike inflicted on America’s sense of inviolability remain raw.

In the decades since, the US has transformed itself from a nation geared towards isolation to one in permanent readiness for combat. Its postwar interventions in Korea, Cambodia and Vietnam join ill-starred recent campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. In 2015,

Depression and mass unemployment vanished, and the US’s war economy boomed. Before long, its status as an industrial and economic behemoth had been secured.

Within six months of Japan’s raid, Washington was hitting back against its aggressor – hard. The US navy and US air force defeated the Japanese at the battle of Midway, and began a systematic



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A young woman holds up a copy of a newspaper on 2 September 1945, the day Japan officially surrendered

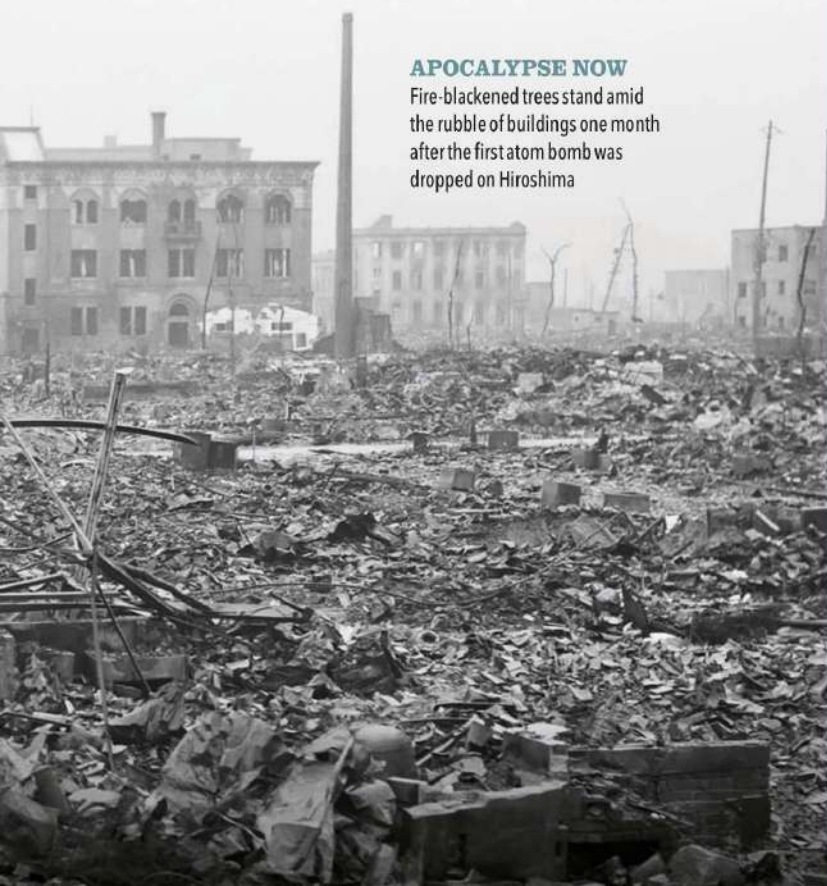


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US military veterans attend a commemoration ceremony in Honolulu in 2018

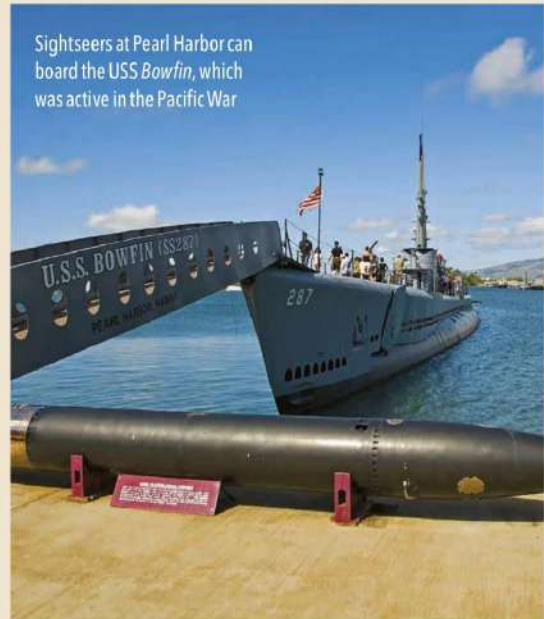
APOCALYPSE NOW

Fire-blackened trees stand amid the rubble of buildings one month after the first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima



VISITING THE SITE TODAY

Sightseers at Pearl Harbor can board the USS *Bowfin*, which was active in the Pacific War

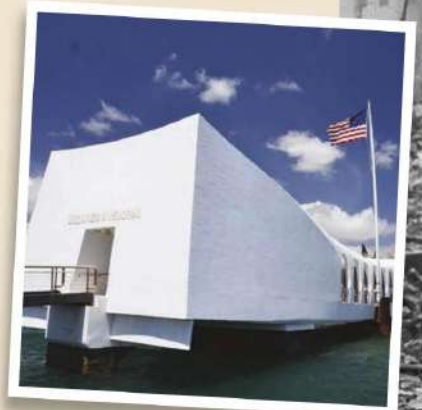


Pearl Harbor today presents a very different vista to the scenes of violence and devastation it witnessed on 7 December 1941. Yet the memories of that day remain vivid – and the monuments and museums on what is still a major US naval base draw 1.7 million visitors every year.

The most striking memorial is the half-submerged wreck of the USS *Arizona*, a battleship destroyed in the raid, where the remains of 1,177 – around half – of those who died on that infamous day still lie. As a war grave, the *Arizona* is inviolate, but visitors can look down through portholes on the great ship. Even today, oil is still seeping from the wreck, while veterans of Pearl Harbor can have their ashes sunk on the ship to join their comrades who died long ago.

Another battleship, the USS *Missouri*, is afloat and open to visitors. Launched in 1944, the 'Mighty Mo' is the last US battleship commissioned to date and saw much action in the Pacific War, where she survived an attack by a *kamikaze* suicide pilot. Her deck was the scene of Japan's official surrender to General Douglas MacArthur in 1945, while the ship remained in service until 1992.

On shore, the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center tells the story of the attack in a remarkably fair and even-handed way, while the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum contains a Mitsubishi A6M Zero, one type of Japanese aircraft that struck the base. Submarine USS *Bowfin*, which served throughout the Pacific, rounds off the sites that can be visited.



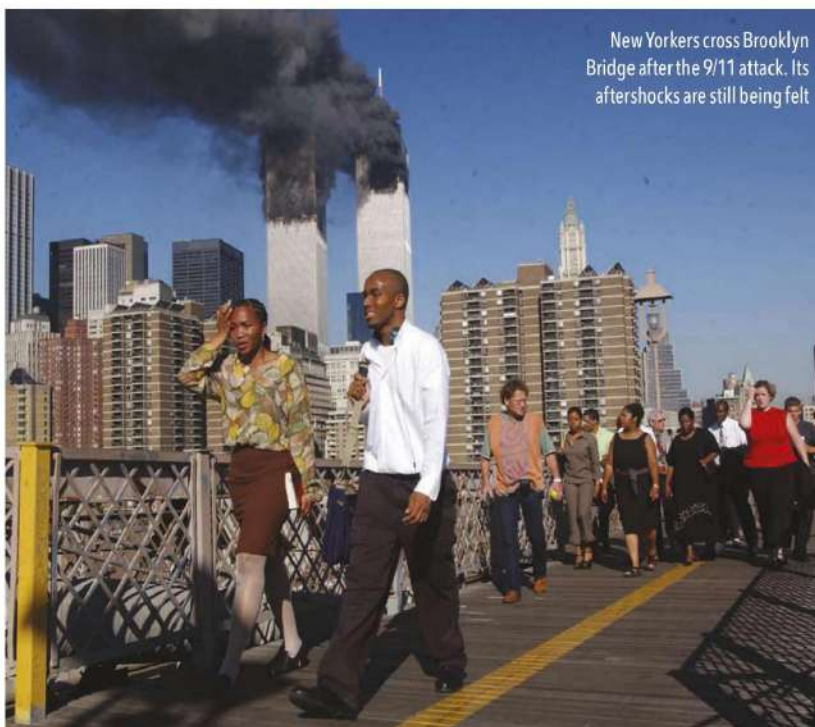
The USS *Arizona* memorial at Pearl Harbor



ACCOUNT FREEZE

American soldiers guard the Central Bank of Iraq in Baghdad from looters in 2003. US military spending is now astronomical

Pearl Harbor ushered in the atomic age and three-quarters of a century of American global dominance



New Yorkers cross Brooklyn Bridge after the 9/11 attack. Its aftershocks are still being felt

54 per cent of Washington's total federal discretionary spending was on the military – more than health, social security, education, housing and transport combined – while the nation gives a disproportionate share of funding to UN peace enforcement. The US has slipped seamlessly into the UK's old role as the 'global policeman' – a position it is difficult to imagine it adopting had Pearl Harbor not woken the country from its introspection.

There are numerous topical parallels between the events of 12/7 and those of 9/11. Both involved surprise aerial assaults on US soil, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Americans. In response to both acts, the US went to war nursing a sense of grievance over what was seen as an unprovoked act of aggression. In both cases, rough justice was meted out to racial and religious groups who were deemed to be collectively guilty.

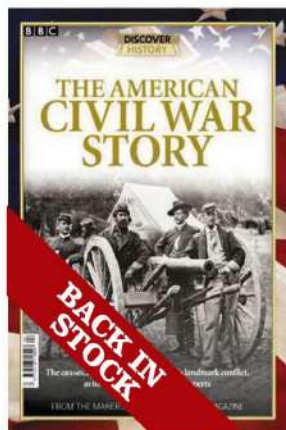
Both attacks had unintended consequences. Pearl Harbor ushered in the atomic age and three-quarters of a century of American supremacy and global dominance. The results of 9/11, meanwhile, are still being played out. ●

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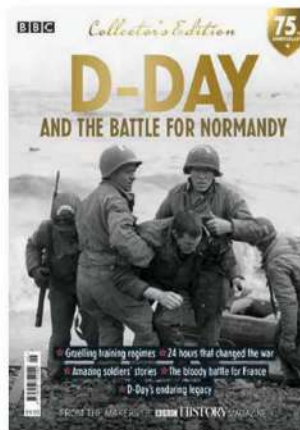
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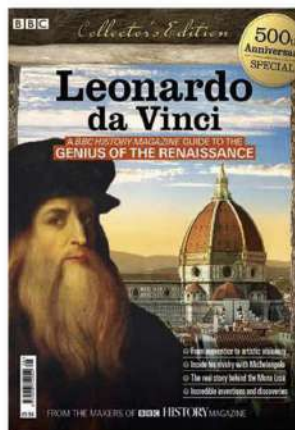
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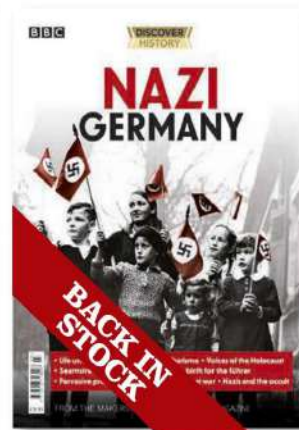
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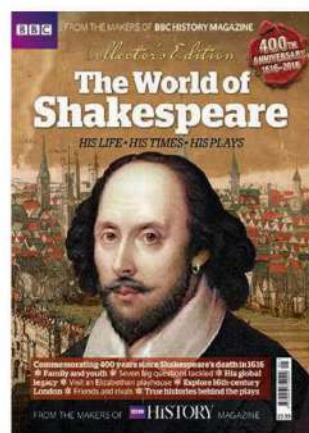
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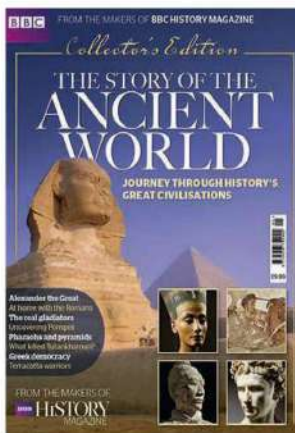
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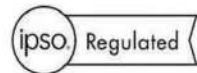
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James Holland is a historian, writer and broadcaster, and the author of *Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France* (Bantam Press, 2019). On page 6, he reveals why the Pearl Harbor attack still means so much after almost 80 years.

Nigel Jones is a historian, journalist and biographer, who contributes regularly to *BBC History Magazine*. On page 20, he charts the key Second World War events leading up to the strike on Pearl Harbor. On page 90, he examines the impact of the strike on the US in the decades since.

Robert Lyman is a writer and historian. His books on the Second World War include *Japan's Last Bid for Victory: The Invasion of India, 1944* (Pen & Sword, 2011) and *Under a Darkening Sky: The American Experience in Nazi Europe: 1939-1941* (Pegasus, 2018). On page 76, he asks why American intelligence failed to detect the upcoming attack, and on page 82 he reflects on why Japan decided to launch such a high-risk raid - a decision that eventually led to its defeat.

Gavin Mortimer is a writer, historian and television consultant whose books include *The SAS in World War II* (Osprey, 2011). From page 34, he provides a chronological account of the attack, from Japan's first dreams of a strike to Roosevelt's grave announcement to Congress afterwards. On page 66, he also reveals how the United States, thirsty for revenge, swung into action after the attack.

Francis Pike is a historian and economic geopolitical advisor. His books include *Empires at War: A Short History of Modern Asia Since World War II* (IB Tauris, 2009) and *Hirohito's War: The Pacific War, 1941-45* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). On page 10, he charts how Japan's imperial ambitions put it on a collision course with the US.

VIEW FROM ABOVE

An aerial shot of Pearl Harbor base taken on 30 October 1941, shortly before the Japanese attack. Ford Island can be seen in the centre

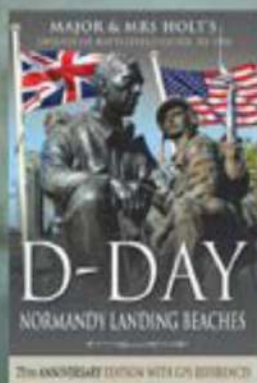


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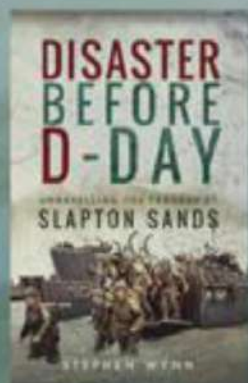
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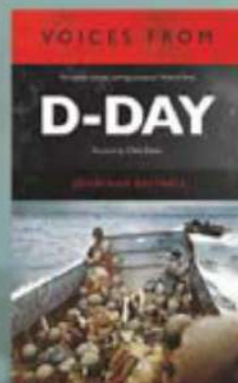
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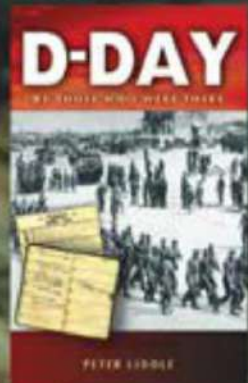
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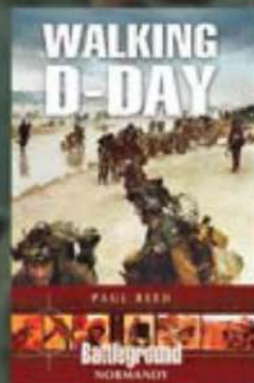
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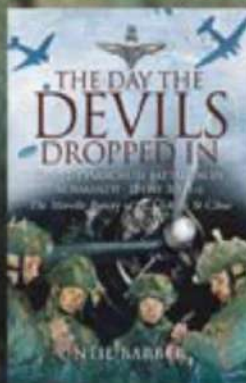
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